

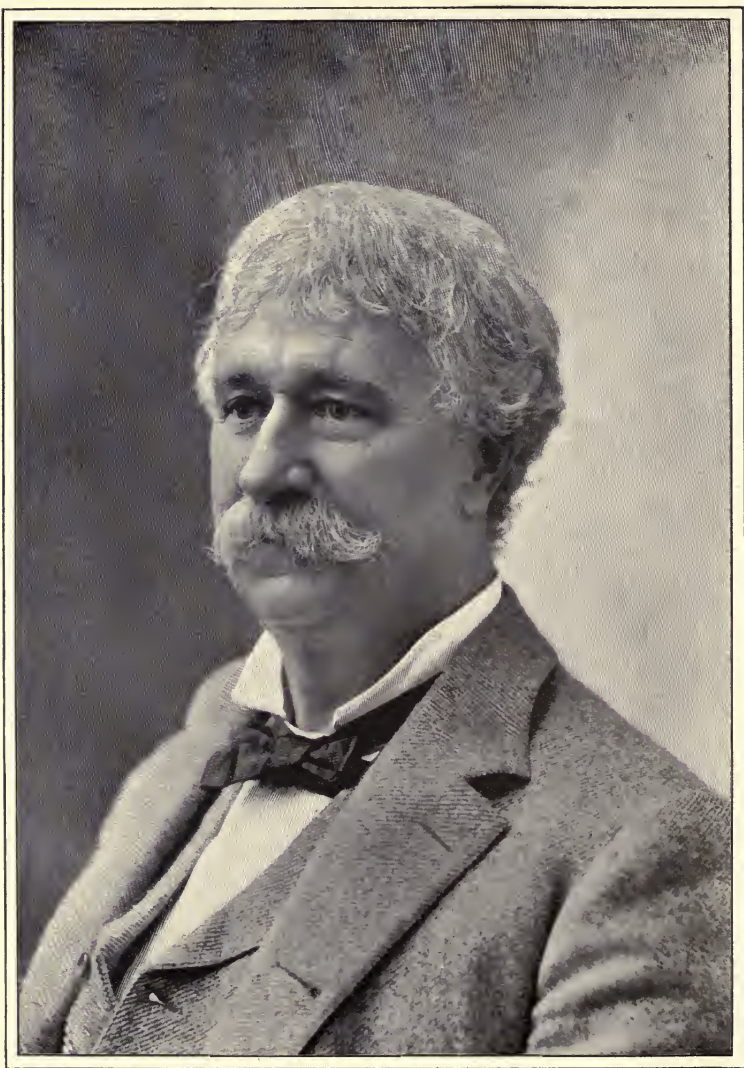
MURRAY.

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(Vol II - Adirondack
Tales

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W. H. H. MURRAY,
THE MURRAY HOMESTEAD, GUILFORD, CONN.

"We shall die at the Lords' appointment
ground" I said the Trapper, standing.
"We shall come to the edge of the Great
Clearing when the last sleep of the
trail has been trodden and not
before, sign or no sign"

Sincerely
D. H. Munnay

THE ADIRONDACK TALES.

VOL. II.

THE STORY OF THE
MAN WHO MISSED IT,

THE STORY THAT THE KEG TOLD ME,

AND

WHO WERE THEY?

W. H. H. MURRAY.

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THE STORY
OF THE MAN WHO MISSED IT.

THE STORY OF THE MAN WHO MISSED IT.

CHAPTER I.

THANKSGIVING DAY had come and gone, and the Old Trapper had retired after the festivities of it to his couch, and had yielded himself to slumber. His sleep was of the kind to be expected in one of his age and habits: sufficiently profound to satisfy the wants of nature, but by no means so heavy as not to yield back the sleeper to wakefulness at the coming within range of the senses of any sound or sight that was unusual. For some two hours the Trapper had been sleeping, and the great white moon, shining at its full, stood nearly at that point in the zenith which marked the midnight hour, when the two hounds, who were lying on the great hearthstone in front of the logs still in full blaze and glow, lifted their heads with a common movement, and gave voice to a low, interrogative growl.

“What is it, pups?” said the Old Trapper with a quickness of utterance that might have led one not acquainted with his habits to imagine that he had not even been asleep; “what is it, pups?” and he rose to a sitting posture in his bed, with his eyes on the dogs and his senses fully alert.

The hounds, as if feeling they had done their duty, made no further manifestation, and again rested their muzzles on their extended paws, but with eyes that still remained fastened upon the door.

The old man slid from the bed and into his clothes with a hunter’s celerity. But, even while doing it, his ear caught the lightest possible sound of approaching footsteps.

It was evident from the looks of the Trapper that he was surprised. The steps approaching were without doubt those of a man. Had they been those of an animal, they would have caused no astonishment, for animals of the larger sort, especially when compelled by hunger, were not infrequent visitors to the little clearing in which his cabin stood; but to hear a man coming towards his door at the dead of night, when he supposed there was not a human being within

fifty miles, was extraordinary enough to quicken his attention and strike him with surprise.

But whoever the man was that was approaching, he was evidently in no hurry. Occasionally he stopped, and after a moment's pause would come on again. His steps were not only slow, but the sound they made was the sound of a step taken in weakness or excessive weariness.

Wondering who his midnight visitor could be, the old man seated himself on the edge of the bed and waited his coming. The dogs still lay on the hearth, with their muzzles on their paws, and their eyes fastened on the door.

The steps approached the threshold and stopped. For a moment no farther sound was heard. Then a knock sounded upon the door. It was a weak, timid knock; not the strong, hearty, friendly knock that a hunter delivers on a comrade's door; but a faltering, half mistrustful tap, as if the one who gave it had hesitated before giving it, and was by no means sure that he had a right to give it at all.

The Old Trapper still remained seated on the edge of the bed, and before the faint sound of the feeble tap had died, said, in his usual strong and hearty tone of voice: —

“Come in!”

For a moment no response followed the invitation, then a hand was heard feebly fumbling with the latch, which finally it grasped, and the door slowly opened,—opened as if the man was still in doubt either as to the propriety of his own conduct, or the reception with which he would meet. Thus slowly the door opened, and a man stepped into the room; a dog followed the man; the door closed, and the man and the dog stood in the firelight fully revealed.

The hounds made no movement, and the Trapper stirred not an inch. Thus for a full minute the Trapper and the hounds looked at the man and the dog; and the man and the dog looked at the Trapper and the hounds. And it is doubtful if ever before there stood in a hunter's cabin so singular a looking man or so remarkable a looking dog.

The Trapper looked the man over from head to foot, and with equal curiosity studied the dog, each remarkable in his way. And as the reader is destined to learn of the peculiarities of both, it may perhaps be well that we describe the two singular visitors to his cabin whom the Trapper thus unexpectedly saw standing before him.

The man was tall—remarkably tall. He was spare—unusually spare. As he entered he had lifted a light cloth cap from his head, and his countenance was fully revealed. His hair was black as black could be, not over-plenty in thickness, but long enough to reach stragglingly to his shoulders. Amid its blackness some gray was mingled. His forehead was high—unusually high—and very prominent, especially in its upper half. His eyebrows were abundant even to shagginess,—strong brows of coarsish hair. There was gray in them, too. His eyes were large, very black, very mild—a mildness that bordered on plaintiveness; but through their dimness there shone the suggestion of a gleam and glow as if their mildness might be set on fire from some latent but unsmothered flame. His ears were large, set prominently out from the head, thin, sensitively edged. Between them and the eyes, on either side, was a recess beneath which the cheek bones projected sharply. The nose was large, but thin and finely curved at the nostril's edge.

So far the face, if not strong, was remarkably intellectual,—a face that denoted ability; a face that argued mental quickness, finest imagination,

and the power to idealize the common so that it would seem extraordinary,—to create another world if the present one should not suffice. But the mouth was weak. It was small in size; too small compared with the noble countenance above it; the lips were curved, and in spite of years smooth and rounded like a boy's,—a mouth of remarkably infantile appearance considering the age of its owner. The chin beneath did not retreat, nor was it prominent enough for power. The curvature of the cheek, as outlined by the jaws, was not full enough to express determination and manly vigor.

His head sat on a neck that was long and small. Exposure—for it was without cover—had wrinkled it and made its skin coarse. His shoulders were thin and stooping,—such as students of unusual height acquire. His clothing was remarkable: first, because there was so little of it; and, secondly, because it was of so thin a fabric. His coat was evidently unpadded, of cheap material, and buttoned closely around him even to his neck. It fitted him too closely to allow one to believe that his waistcoat was either of very thick or very warm material. His pantaloons could not be called stout, and were

chiefly remarkable for their decorations. They were of composite material, and suggested Joseph's coat, without its splendor. The Old Trapper's quick eye noted several pieces of buckskin that had been stitched into the original fabric in different places, and several other pieces of light cloth that bore a suspicious resemblance to those little bags with which dealers in family provisions are acquainted. His shoes were large in size but low in build, and one of them at the toes resembled a doorway sufficiently open for easy exit.

On the man's back was a pack, or what might have been a pack, if the contents had been sufficiently bulky to extend it. As it was, there was a look of leanness about it which suggested that its owner was either not troubled with earthly possessions, or else was too modest to display them. In his hands the man held a rifle of flint-lock pattern, very long in the barrel, and of an appearance which suggested antiquity. A little leather pouch and a small powder-horn with a wooden stopple completed his outfit.

Such was the man in outward appearance as he stood within the doorway, with the firelight shining upon him, while the Trapper with steady and curious gaze looked him over.

The dog was as remarkable in appearance as his master. He was of medium size, of the Irish breed, in part, and showed unmistakable evidence of high blood, but blood by no means free of extraordinary outcrossing; for while his ears were long and thin, as an Irish hound's should be, his body was clothed with the coarse, stiff hair of the terrier kind. To say that he was thin in flesh would not be a characterization; he was extraordinarily thin. He was not only thin, but he seemed conscious of his thinness. He did not stand erect, but in a kind of doubled-up and shrinking posture, as if he felt that his natural length was out of proportion with his thickness, and he could in some way improve his appearance by concentration. Yet he was by no means devoid of intelligence, for his eyes were bright, his muzzle lean, and his frontal prominent. He struck one as a dog naturally of uncommon parts, but who had experienced such a series of canine disappointments that he had lost confidence in himself. A more extraordinary looking man or a more remarkable looking dog was certainly never seen. The Trapper rose from the bed on which he had been sitting, and, as if he had rightly divined the condition of his strange visitors, said: —

“Stranger, what can I do for ye?”

The man looked at him with his large black eyes and replied, in a mild, deferential voice:—

“Are you John Norton?”

“Sartin. Yis, I be John Norton; and ef there’s anything John Norton can do for ye, jest state it.”

“I was taking a little walk through the woods—it’s a very pleasant night; I don’t know as I ever saw a pleasanter night—I and my dog were taking a little stroll through the woods—and as I was standing on the bank out yonder admiring the beauties of Nature, I happened to see your cabin, and, feeling in rather a companionable mood, I thought I would see if you were up. I feared I should interrupt you. I hope I haven’t interrupted you. Have I?”

“Interrupted me? Lord, no! I was sittin’ here with the hounds wishin’ somebody would come along, and yer jest as welcome as ef ye’d been expected for a month.”

The white angel that took into heaven the old man’s sentence—which, from an ethical point of view, was not exactly truthful—attributed beyond doubt the slight inaccuracy of the remark to the motive which prompted, and forgave it.

For the Old Trapper was not slow to discern that if the stranger for whose coming he had placed the plate on his bountiful board that day had come late, he had come at last, and that God had sent a hungry man to his door. And so he added, his whole heart moving out toward the stranger, who, as he stood before him, presented the strongest possible appeal to his sympathies:—

“Stranger, set yer rifle there in the corner and move up in front of the fire. Here, pups, make room, and let yer shiverin’ companion have a chance to warm himself.” And the Trapper shoved the great arm-chair in front of the blazing logs, and actually took the gun from the stranger’s hand and placed it against the wall, while the man moved forward and quietly seated himself in the offered chair.

The old man busied himself for a moment in making additions to the fire, and stirring the glowing coals, while the stranger stretched out his thin hands and warmed them by the genial blaze.

“Don’t ye want somethin’ to eat?” asked the Trapper.

The man continued to warm his hands for an instant before making reply, and then he said:—

“I don’t want to trouble you. I see you have cleared away the dishes, but if you happen to have some cold victuals left from your Thanksgiving dinner,—I believe this is Thanksgiving,—is it not?” —

“Sartin,” said the Trapper; “sartin, this be Thanksgivin’, and me and the pups had a great feast, and I had a plate sot for ye all day.”

“How?” asked the man.

“I had a plate, I say,” returned the Trapper, “sot for ye all day.”

“Indeed! I am sorry I missed it. I have missed many things in my life; —it is not unusual for me to miss things; but I always get them in the end. *I always get them in the end,*” repeated the man, with a rising inflection of the voice. “You don’t think it’s anything very bad, do you,” —addressing the Trapper earnestly, —“for a man to miss things if he gets them in the end?”

“Well, stranger,” returned the Trapper, “I don’t know about gittin’ things at the eend. It sartinly strikes me that it’s a good deal better to git ’em by the middle. This gittin’ things by the eend don’t sarve a man’s parpose, as I conceit.”

“Oh, I don’t know,” said the man dreamily. “It don’t make much difference when we get what we want if we only get it in the end. But I am sorry,—if you had a plate set for me and you had food enough. Did you have food enough?” and the man put the question plaintively, with a tinge of incredulity in his voice, as if the habit of want had made him incredulous as to plenty. “Are you sure you had food enough?”

“Food enough!” exclaimed the Trapper. “Heavens and ’arth! do ye suppose me and the pups come to Thanksgivin’ without food enough? Ye jest set there a minit while I fetch ye out yer supper.” And the old man busied himself in bringing the table to the center of the floor, and filling it with the ample abundance left uneaten at the conclusion of the meal.

When the man had moved forward to seat himself in the chair, his dog moved forward too. At first he had seated himself in a half-crouching posture, a little in the rear of the chair, as if, however sure his master might be of the cordiality of the reception, he himself was not certain of his welcome. But gradually, a little at a time, he had moved himself forward until he had actually placed himself in advance of his

master, and was now sitting on the hearthstone scarcely a foot from the ashes, and even then it was noticeable that he shivered. He was evidently a dog of a great deal of character and perfectly self-possessed. Few dogs could have been thus placed within such close proximity to two of his kind that were strangers to him without either showing signs of fear, or making some canine advances to his companions. But this dog showed, on the one hand, no sign of timidity, and, on the other, no consciousness that another of his species was in the room. For he did not even turn his eyes toward the hounds, nor in the direction of the Trapper, who was bearing the savory dishes immediately past him to the table. And when the latter placed a large platter of venison on the hearth, in order to warm it, within a few inches of his body, so that the odor of the meat must have entered his nostrils, he never by the least movement showed consciousness of its proximity, but continued to gaze with sober attention into the fire, as if his poor frame found full satisfaction in the ministry which the genial warmth was rendering to his system. Once, indeed, he did turn his eyes up to the face of his master, with a look absolutely human

in their expression of gladness and gratitude. He even moved his forward parts so that by stretching his neck he could touch his master's hands that were extended toward the warmth. He moved his muzzle gently against one of the palms, and lapped it with his tongue, and then quietly resumed his former position, and again gazed steadily into the fire.

The Trapper was not slow to mark the action of the dog, nor sense the propriety of his conduct.

"That's a knowin' dog, ef he be a leetle thin," said he to the stranger. "Ye've consorted togeth'er some time, I reckon."

"Yes," replied his master, "he has been my companion twelve years."

"It's a goodly time," resumed the Trapper, as he busied himself with the preparations, "and a man who has feasted and fasted with a dog twelve year naterally grows to love him."

"We have not feasted much," said the man; "we have never had much luck. We have fasted a good deal, and fasting makes better friends than feasting in this world. But we shall surely have our feast by and by. I have told him many times we should have our feasting by and by."

"I trust ye may," answered the Trapper; "ye shall sartinly have a taste of it to-night, both ye and yer dog; for the vict'als be plenty, and the cookin' is as good as a man who has cooked his own food for sixty year can make it."

"Lucky," said the man,—speaking to his dog, through whose frame there still ran an occasional shiver,—“Lucky, our host says we shall feast to-night.”

A human being could not have understood the language more plainly: at least, a human being could not have responded with a more positive manifestation of intelligence. For the dog turned his face with a quick motion toward his master, his ears pricked, his eyes fairly danced, his tail swept joyfully from right to left, and, turning deliberately around with his back to the fire, he fixed his eyes upon the table with an unmistakable expression of eagerness.

"Come, stranger," said the Trapper, "kick off yer shoes and strip off yer stockin's and pull on these warm socks;" and the old man tossed a pair, knitted of coarsest yarn, on to the hearth-stone; "and then move up to the table and fill yerself and yer dog, who is mighty nigh starva-

tion, as I jedge. Ye'll both feel better arter yer full, for it's a cold night, and I conceit yer tramp has been a long un."

The man did as he was bidden. He untied his shoes and removed them from his feet. His stockings were not of the warmest nor free of holes, and when he had pulled the thick, warm socks on to his feet, he rose and moved to the table with a look of contentment and happy expectation that seemed to lift twenty years from his record.

The amount of food on the table seemed to astonish him. For a moment he held his knife and fork idly in his hands, his gaze ranging over the bountiful board as if he was in doubt from which dish to help himself first, while his eyes had the peculiar eager look of one who was so hungry that he could not suppress the evidences of satisfaction which the presence of food had brought to his face.

"Ye seem a leetle in doubt," said the Trapper, "which of the meats to try fust. And I conceit the reason of yer feelin', for more'n once have I fasted myself when a young man, in the old wars, and I was out skirmishin' on the trail of the inimy, when the sound of yer gun would

bring a hunderd of the vagabonds on to ye in a minit. Yis, I've fasted in the midst of plenty, and I've-knowed what it is to come to a feast suddenly when the stomach was empty and the cravin' of natur' onnaterally strong in me. My advice to ye is that ye try the venison haunch, for it's the only meat that a man can fairly fill himself with and not feel sort of oneasy arterwards. Yis, try the venison, stranger, for the buck was a good un, and ye'll find the juices will foller yer knife."

The man waited no longer. He cut a slice of the venison of a size that showed that his necessities were great or his determination high. The Trapper's eyes fairly danced as he saw him land the piece on his plate. Yet hungry as the man was, he fed himself with entire propriety. But his knife and fork were nevertheless quick in their movements, and it was evident that the keen sense of his hunger had made him for a time oblivious of his surroundings; for he spoke not a word to his host, and his countenance never lost the look of determined eagerness. He had certainly more than half finished the huge piece of venison with which he had helped himself, when he paused, and, turning to his dog,

who stood at his side looking up into his face, he said: —

“ Lucky, will you forgive me? ”

The words were spoken as they might have been to a human companion whom inadvertently he had slighted, or of whose presence he had become unmindful when he should have been specially mindful of it. The tone could not have been more apologetic had the words been addressed to a man and not to a dog, nor could they have been received more intelligently than the dog received them. He wagged his tail good-naturedly, while his eyes gave his master a look of affection that no one could fail to understand. The man cut the remaining part of the piece into sections, and gave each mouthful to the dog. The dog ate with the same eagerness as his master, and, we may say, with the same propriety, for he stood steadfastly in his position, made no indecorous movement of haste, but received the morsels from his master's hand with such thankfulness as only a dog when hungry can show to the master who feeds him.

We need not say that the Trapper had not been careless of the spectacle presented by the man and the dog. Nor was he untouched by the

evidence of affection existing between the two. But profound as was his pity for his strange and nearly starved guest, the sense of humor in him was too strong not to be stirred.

“I sartinly think, stranger,” said he, “that we’d better jine works, for I conceit I can help ye out a leetle. Yer dog sartinly looks empty, and it’ll take a good deal of meat to fill him. I don’t conceit he’s been very familiar with vict’als lately, but I can see he has the true idee of eatin’; so if ye’ll jest send him this side of the table, I’ll feed him while ye feed yerself. There can be a good deal of weight added to yer dog by reasonable management afore ye be ready to move back from the table.”

“I thank you,” said the man, as he helped himself to another bountiful supply, “but Lucky and I always eat together, when we have anything to eat, and I doubt if he would take food from a stranger. I always divide my food with him. Don’t you think that a man should always divide his food with his dog, John Norton?”

“Yis,” said the Trapper, somewhat hesitatingly, “as a rule, I sartinly think yer be right; but ef the master be hungry, and the dog is a good-sized un, and actu’lly empty, and vict’als

be scarce, I can't say,—no, I sartinly can't say, that the man should divide with the dog at the beginnin' of the eatin.' A leetle later on perhaps he should divide,—a leetle later on, as I conceit."

The man was evidently not devoid of humor himself. For the first time since he entered the cabin, and for the first time for many days, perhaps, a pleased expression came into his face. The suggestion of a smile played round his lips, and he looked good-naturedly into the face of the old man sitting opposite, whose countenance showed through its lines that semi-witty expression which never seems so witty as when it beams from the face of the aged. But he evidently did not assent to the opinion of the Trapper, for, as the eating progressed, at every mouthful with which he fed himself he gave an equal portion to his canine companion.

It is doubtful if ever a feast was more heartily eaten or enjoyed. Of food there was enough, and the man ate his fill,—not only ate himself, but gave to his dog, till it was evident that the hunger of both was appeased. At last he shoved his chair back from the table, and, with a happy expression on his face, he said:—

“Lucky, we’ve had a feast to-night. I told you it would come by and by. We must never be discouraged again, Lucky,—no, we will never be discouraged again, will we?”

The dog fairly shook himself in his delighted indorsement of his master’s affirmation. He actually frisked his assent, and opened his mouth as if he would give voluble expression to the pledge demanded of him. The Trapper laughed, —laughed as a host will when he sees the happiness of his guests, to whom, with his own hands, from his own store, in the benevolence of his heart, he has ministered. And he said, from the impulse of his good nature:—

“Stranger, is there anything else I can do for ye?”

“John Norton,” said the man, “I came to your door a stranger, and you took me in; I was a-hungered, and you gave me meat; I was cold and weary, and you warmed and rested me; I was unhappy and you made me glad. I and my dog thank you for your goodness. And may the Lord bless you for what you have done for one of the least of his children.”

The man said this gravely, tenderly, gratefully. And as he said it, with a motion as natu-

ral as true courtesy and gratitude could make it, he laid his hand on his heart and bowed to the Trapper.

The Trapper was visibly affected by the acknowledgment of his guest. His face, in its sobered sweetness, acknowledged the sentiment of the stranger, and returned it with equally unconscious courtesy.

“Ye are not the fust man,” he replied, “that has come to my camp empty; for more’n once have I shared my leetle with the stranger, and more’n once has the stranger shared his leetle with me. There’s a good deal of honest givin’ and takin’ in the world; leastwise there’s a good deal in the woods when the fortunit and onfortunit meet. And Henry says that the same is true in the settlements, and I sartinly conceit that the Lord has knowledge of the honest givin’ and takin’ between his creeturs that have, and his creeturs that haven’t, whether it be done in the woods or in the clearin’s.”

As the old man mentioned the word settlement, a look of pain came to the face of his guest, as if the mention of cities had quickened unpleasant recollections. When the Trapper had concluded he replied:—

“I know not whom you call by the name of Henry, nor would I dispute his word, but my experience of cities and of the men that live in them has not been of a character to impress me with either their generosity or their justice. I have found men eager to get and to keep, but I have not found them eager to give, John Norton; nor have I found them honest in their getting or their keeping. I have found them ready to cheat; I have found them ready to lie; I have found them ready to kill!” And the man straightened his form to its erectest posture, and looked the Trapper steadily in the eye.

“I don’t doubt,” returned the Trapper, “that there be vagabonds in the settlements as well as in the woods, for more’n once have they played their pranks on me. More’n once have they fingered my traps and stolen the fur that an honest man’s labor had arned; but I’ve left my marks on most of the rogues, and the few that have managed to dodge my lead will git fetched up in the Judgment, ef the Lord keeps watch of the villainy in the woods, and I dare say He does, of the woods and the settlements both.”

“Perhaps He does,” said the stranger; “but

His Judgment is a great way off, and the wronged find it hard to wait."

"I've often thought of that," said the Trapper; "I've often thought of that, and I've helped Him out a good deal off and on. I was comin' in from my traps this fall, and I caught a dirty thief rummagin' among my pots and kittles, and he had e'enamost everything I had in my cabin here done up in a bundle, and as I opened the door he was actu'lly tryin' to git it on to his back."

"What did you do to him, John Norton?" asked the man eagerly, as if he were even more interested in the principle involved than in the narration of the facts.

"I held a council with him," said the Trapper, "and I did most of the talkin', and I mixed a good deal of arnest actin' with the talkin'; and between the actin' and the talkin', I sartinly conceit I made the p'intn clear to him. I doubt if the Lord will have much to do with this case, for I was a good deal riled, and I settled with the vagabond for time and etarnity both. The fact is," said the Trapper, and he leaned forward toward his guest, and placed his brawny hand on the table, "I conceit that the Jedge-

ment is a good deal split up, and gin out by piecemeal, and that the Lord's idee is that when an honest hunter finds a vagabond in his cabin, rummagin' his stores, that the Judgment Day has come then and there. How does it strike ye, stranger?"

"The Great Book says, 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.'"

"Sartinly, sartinly, that's right; that is, it's right from His p'int of lookin' at it. I don't conceit that a mortal has any right to be revengeful, but in a matter of square justice, — yis, in a matter of square justice, where the right and the wrong stands out like the prongs of a buck,— it sartinly seems as ef the Lord meant that man should tend to the justice while He took care of the vengeance. I don't doubt that the vagabond I caught in the cabin here will git another rakin' over when the Lord takes him in hand; but I gave him enough of honest reckonin' to sarve Divine parposes while he lives on the 'arth."

While the conversation had been going on, the Trapper had been clearing the table of the remnants of the repast, and at the conclusion of his remarks he drew a chair up to the corner of the fireplace, in front of which the stranger

had already seated himself, and the two men, so unlike in character, and, we may say, so unlike in appearance, sat for a moment gazing silently into the fire, which roared and flamed loudly and merrily upward.

During all the conversation the dog had been an evident listener. Whenever the Trapper spoke the dog turned his face and looked directly at him; when his master made response he would as attentively look at him. Indeed, had he been gifted with human intelligence and human feeling, and, we may say, with human sense of propriety, he could not have paid closer attention to the dialogue as it proceeded; and now he was sitting upright between the two men, with eyes alert, and with every appearance of interest as to the conversation when it should be resumed.

“Where be yer home?” asked the Trapper suddenly.

“I have no home,” said the man.

“Where was yer home?” queried the Trapper again.

“I never had a home,” said the man.

The Trapper seemed for a moment disconcerted. He raised his face, and looking at his strange guest said:—

“Where are yer friends, and where be yer family?”

“I have no family,” replied the man; “nor have I friends, save one.”

“Where’s he?” the old man asked.

“He is here,” replied the man; “here is the only friend I have in the world,” and he looked at the dog.

It may have been in answer to his look, it may have been from a fine sense of interpretation of what was being said; but, from whatever cause, the dog, when his master said, “This is the only friend I have in the world,” moved himself closer to the man who loved him, and, laying his muzzle on his knee, looked lovingly up to the countenance of one who claimed him as his friend.

“Where was ye born, and what country do ye belong to?” insisted the Trapper.

“I do not know where I was born,” returned the man, “and I have no country.”

“Stranger,” said the Trapper, “I ax yer pardon ef I be meddlin’ with yer own business, but ye’ve come to my cabin and ye are welcome to stay, for I see ye be in trouble. And I’ve lived on the ’arth long enough to larn that them that be in trouble have arned a home and paid

for it in sufferin', and that for sech the Lord intends that every house of the fortunite should be their home. And here ye've come, and here ye can stay and welcome. And I shall not meddle with yer sorrers; for a man's sorrers, like a man's grave, should be respected by the livin', and no stranger should tech either. But it is pleasant in converse to know who ye be talkin' to,—leastwise, to know his name,—and so I ax ye plainly, what was the name yer mother gin ye?"

"I do not know the name that my mother gave me," said the man.

To say that the Trapper was astonished would but half express his surprise. He sat erect in his chair, and fastened his eyes on the man as if expecting to discern evidence of insanity; but no such evidence could he discover. The man's face and every feature of his face, the calmness of his speech, the decorous propriety of his conduct, substantiated beyond doubt his sanity.

The Trapper had finished his inspection. All doubt of the stranger's sanity had by the inspection been dismissed from his mind. His guest was perfectly sane; of that he was sure. The conviction only deepened his astonishment.

Unable to solve the mystery, and greatly excited at the climax to which the dialogue had conducted him, he exclaimed: —

“For Heaven’s sake, stranger, what is yer name? and how shall I call ye?”

“John Norton,” said the man, “only parents have a right to name a child. My parents doubtless named me; but those parents I never saw, and that name I never heard. Whether it was a family name or a name denoting character,—a name given in hope or a name given in dread,—I know not. Family I have not. Parents I never saw. By strangers I was reared, and by ignorant strangers named. That name was not a name. I outgrew it. When I came to the knowledge of its giving, I discarded it. Men outgrow names, John Norton, and they get new names; each man names himself. The joys of one man name him, and the griefs of another name him. I have had no joys and therefore joys cannot name me. I have had only grief, and therefore grief must name me. John Norton, you ask me who I am and what is my name. I will tell you. I am THE MAN WHO HAS MISSED IT.”

For a full minute the Old Trapper said not a

word, but sat looking steadfastly at his guest. Outside, the moon shone brightly, and its white light, poured in through the curtainless window, lay, a great white patch, upon the cabin floor, around the white edges of which the aggressive firelight played with many a threatening flicker. The hounds lay sleeping on the hearth; and the stranger's dog still sat with his head resting on his master's knee, and his eyes turned to his face. At length the old man said:—

“ Friend, the night be not half gone, and men of our years sleep but leetle. I have heerd many a story told by the camp-fire, and many a frontiersman's tale when night overtook us on the trail, and we was waitin' for the mornin'; and next to the sound of a fiddle, nothin' stirs me more than a story — 'specially ef it be strange and onusual. And, ef ye be willin', I should be glad to hear the story of yer life; for sartin it is that never before did I meet a man without a home — without family — without friends — without a country, and without a name.”

For a moment there was another pause. The old man, with the deference born of years, and perhaps borrowed in part from the habits of the Indians with whom he had passed so much of

his life, remained silent. At length the man said :—

“ You have asked me for the story of my life. You shall have it. It is a singular story. Listen.”

And so with his hand resting on the head of his dog, the singular being, in a singular way, proceeded to tell the singular STORY OF THE MAN WHO MISSED IT.

CHAPTER II.

“IT is sixty years next March since a babe, lashed to a broken spar, was washed ashore on the eastern coast. That babe was myself. I came out of the storm, John Norton, and I came out of the depths. A ship was wrecked that night, and not a man was saved, nor a woman, either,—only a babe. What was the ship’s name,—what was the name of her commander,—who owned her, or from what port she sailed,—none ever knew. Whether she came from the east or the west none might tell. In the midst of the ocean, in the midst of darkness, in the midst of storm, she went down, and I alone was saved. Do you know anything of the sea, John Norton?”

The old man kept his silence a moment before answering, and without lifting his eyes he said solemnly:—

“Yis, friend, I know somethin’ of the sea!”

“Do you hate it, John Norton?” asked the man with explosive earnestness.

“The Creater made it,” replied the Trapper;

and the reverence of the tone, more than the words, constituted the answer.

“I care not who made it!” almost shouted the man; “I care not who made it! I hate it! It is wild and wrathful and savage! It thirsts for man’s life, and reaches up the hands of its power only to grasp and destroy. Its smoothness is a deceit; and when it stretches out in its calmness, it stretches out as a lie. It entices man from the shore, it calls him from the bay, it beckons him with its breezes from the safety of the harbor. But when once it has got him out upon its great surface, out from the harbor and the bay and the land where he was safe, then it rises up in its anger, dashes at him in its hate, clutches him with its billows, and drags him down, *down, down* into its hideous depths. Think of the men, John Norton, who have gone down into it! Think of the brave ships that it has swallowed up! Think of the women and children; mothers with their babes, the strong and the tender alike, the wealth and the beauty and the glory of man it has ingulfed! Who can look at the surface of the sea and not think of its bottom,—of the wrecks that are there,—the bones of the dead, and the hideous things, the

dreadful children of its depths, that live and sport among them? Oh! I hate the sea, John Norton, as a man hates the murderer of his father and the destroyer of his mother; for in its depths my mother and father lie. And there they have lain for sixty years; lain in that graveless grave, in that tomb without spot and without name, and I have borne the burden of their untimely loss, with all the misery it entailed, till my head is whitening! ”

Here the man paused a moment. The flash of excitement died out of his face, and the fingers which had been nervously twitching became still. In a moment he asked, speaking in a low and gentle tone:—

“Is it not pleasant, John Norton, to know where your parents are laid after death?”

“Sartinly,” said the Trapper. “Even the Hurons mark their graves with some sign; and I’ve seed many a young chief go to the grave of his father, and lament arter his fashion.”

“Is there any grave that it would be pleasant for you to visit, Old Trapper?”

“There be a grave under a pine-tree, on the shore of the Sound in the State of Connecticut, that it would be sort of cheerful-like to look at

agin; and I have conceited that the pups and me might make a journey in that direction next summer, unless the boy that be livin' comes into the woods. Still, it's no great matter," continued the Trapper; "I often tell Sport, there, that it's no great matter, for I know that the boy sees that it's well kept."

"Yes, it is pleasant," said the man, "for the children to visit the graves of their parents. In the cities the living take great pains with their graveyards, and lavish their money to make them beautiful. And many a time have I been, when I was weary and hungry, and stood at the entrance and seen those who were left come to visit the graves of those who were gone. Many of them brought flowers, and I have followed on after them, and seen them go to the graves of their parents, and lay the flowers on the mounds. I forgot my weariness as I looked, and my hunger, too, John Norton. It was a blessed sight. I could imagine the comfort and consolation they found in doing it. And more than once have I leaned my head on some marble slab and wept that I myself might never see my parents' graves, — never see where my father was laid, or let fall the tribute of my tears on the mound beneath

which my mother slept. It is a dreadful thing, John Norton, not to have even a grave to love on the earth. It is a worse thing yet not to know what your father's name was. But I have never had a grave to love, and I have never known my father's name, nor do I know my race nor the country where they lived."

Here the man paused again. Long and earnestly he gazed into the fire, while his mind wandered back to the time of his earliest recollections. He even allowed to pass unnoticed the mute caress of his dog, that twice rubbed his head against his knee, twice lapped his hand with his tongue, twice looked into his face, but, receiving no notice from his preoccupied master, turned his own face sorrowfully away, as if he felt his inability to relieve his master's spirit from the burden that was on it.

"Ye said ye was washed ashore when ye was but a leetle babe," said the Trapper, at last breaking the silence.

"Yes," said the man; "I was washed ashore, — washed ashore at the break of day. The sea that had swallowed up my parents rejected me. The waves that had murdered them cast me, as if in mockery, upon the beach, unhurt. A fish-

erman found me, took me to his hut, and there I was reared. They gave me a name — no matter what that name was;— they had no right to give me a name. Those who could name me were dead. Do you think anyone but a parent has a right to name a child, John Norton?"

"I suppose they did the best they could," replied the Trapper; "they'd got to call ye some-thin', and I suppose they did the best they could."

"Perhaps they did," said the man.

"Did they treat ye well?" queried the Trapper.

"No; they beat me, and kicked me, and cursed me," he replied in a tone that bordered on bitterness.

"Why did they beat ye?" asked the Trapper.

"They beat me," answered the man, "because I was not theirs; because I came to them unsought, came to be a burden to them. I was their plague and torment, because they did not love me. All children that are not loved are plagues and torments. Only love can find happiness in the wants of a child; only love can bear with patience the toils by day and night that the coming of a child brings to a house. They did not love me because I was not theirs, and

had no right to be where I was. I do not blame them; what right had I to be? They were poor; what right had I to eat their bread? They owed me nothing, and yet they had to give."

"But ye sartinly could help 'em arter ye were growed," said the Trapper. "It don't take long for a boy to git big enough to 'arn the leetle he eats and the leetle he wears."

"I never earned a cent for them;" retorted the man; "not a cent did I ever earn for them."

"That wasn't right," said the Trapper. "Why didn't ye make the best ye could of yer lot and work for yer livin', as other boys have to?"

"Because," replied the man, "their work was on the sea, and I would not put my foot in a boat. And when they used to drag me aboard, I used to scream and cry and crouch down in the bottom, I was so frightened to go out upon the sea."

"Why was ye so frightened to go out upon the sea?" queried the Trapper.

"Because," almost shouted the man, "I saw dreadful things in the sea. I saw ships going down!—sinking, sinking, sinking, mile after mile, into its depths, with their masts all standing and sails all set, and men and women on

their decks. And I used to see great and horrid creatures swimming about in the depths, — things with mouths bigger than their bodies; things that eat nothing but men, and women, and children, that the sea sends down to them; things with great eyes that leered at me and winked at me; things with claws that kept reaching up after me, — claws that opened and shut, as if eager to get hold of me, and pull me down that they might eat me up. And I never went out upon the sea that I didn't see a man and a woman lying at the bottom — lying side by side — with their hands clasped tightly together, while the great hideous creatures of the sea were swimming around them and over them. And I knew the man was my father, and the woman was my mother, — a father without a name, and a mother that I knew not what to call. And I used to shriek, and scream, and crawl under the thwarts of the boat, crazy with fear. And when I got ashore I would run into the woods, and keep running, until I fell down from weariness. That is why I didn't work for them, because their work was on the sea, and I could not go upon the sea because I saw such dreadful things in it and was so frightened."

“What did ye do, finally?” said the Trapper.

“Do?” said the man. “I ran away. I ran away from the house that was never a home to me;—from the house that had no father and mother in it; from the house where I had no right to be;—a boy without a home, without father or mother, without a country, without a name, and without a friend.”

“Where did ye spend yer childhood?” asked the Trapper.

“Childhood! God in heaven!” almost screamed the man, “I never had a childhood. How could a boy, without father or mother, without a home, without anyone to love him, have a childhood? I was old when I was young; I had no mind as a boy, no heart as a boy, because I had no surroundings to draw a boy’s mind out or make a boy’s heart feel.”

“Where did ye git yer vict’als?” interrogated the Trapper.

“Food! I never had much food. I ate roots, and nuts, and berries, and apples, for years. I never ate at a table unless by chance. I had none to provide for me, and so I provided for myself. I found what I could, and I stole what I couldn’t find,—stole to satisfy my hunger.

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Do you think that was stealing, John Norton?"

"I conceit not," said the Trapper; "least-wise, I conceit the Lord keeps a kind of privit reckonin' in sech cases, and sorter eases up on it in the Jedgment."

"If there be justice in heaven, it is so," said the man, "for no man can sin without knowledge. And I had no knowledge of right and wrong, and my acts were acts of necessity. Did you ever see a dog steal a piece of meat, Old Trapper?"

"Sartin," responded the Trapper. "Rover had a great appetite as a pup, and I had to larn him the Commandments with 'arnestness. I didn't mind his leetle thievin's, for a pup is a pup, and he will have his pranks; but I came into the cabin one day, and he had not only cleaned the kittle of the soup, but he had a roll of tenderline in his mouth nigh on as big as his body, and I 'tended to his eddication on the spot, and gin him the idees of right and wrong as clearly as I could with the help of a moccasin."

"I meant," said the man, the earnestness of whose expression the humor of the Trapper had not lightened a shade, "I meant to ask you if

you ever saw a starving dog steal a piece of meat?"

"Sartin, sartin," answered the Trapper. "The dogs of the Injuns are always starvin', and I have consorted with the redskins enough to note their habits, and few be the movements of life about their villages that my eye hasn't seen."

"Then, you know how I used to steal, John Norton. I used to creep up on things; I used to crawl in the grass after things, like a thieving cur driven by starvation, but frightened at every motion I made lest I should be detected. Yes, I used to steal because I was gaunt with hunger, and the wants of my stomach made me a thief."

"Yer lot was a hard un, that's a fact," said the Trapper. "Did they ever catch ye?"

"Yes, they caught me," answered the man.

He said no more, but his eyes darkened, and his brows lowered over them in wrath.

"What did they do with ye?" asked the Trapper.

For a moment the man made no reply. His fingers worked convulsively and his body actually trembled, and then he said suddenly, almost fiercely:—

“John Norton, do you know what a poorhouse is?”

“I have knowed a great many cabins scant of meat,” said the Trapper, “when the huntin’ was poor; and I’ve seen the redskins starvin’ in their tents, and” —

“I don’t mean that,” said the man; “I don’t mean that. Do you know what the poorhouses are that the towns and the cities build for those who are too unfortunate, or too weak, or too aged, to earn their living?”

“I don’t understand ye,” said the Trapper.

“I will tell you,” said the man, “what a poorhouse is. It is a house which the rich of a town build to put their beggars in,—old men and old women, and children born in poverty or born without knowledge of their parents. They build a house and they hire a man to keep that house, and they pay so much money to the man for keeping it. If the man is a good man, and they pay him enough, the poor are well fed. They have beds to sleep in; they have warm clothes and are comfortable. But if the man is a bad man, he takes the money the town gives him for his own use, and the paupers are starved. And they have straw for beds, and they have

rags for clothing. I lived two years in a poorhouse, and for months at a time neither old nor young had a mouthful of meat, only coarse bread and potatoes, John Norton. And we slept on straw, and the straw wasn't clean at that, and we had nothing but rags to cover us. * We had no medicine if we were sick, and if one of us died they put him in a pine coffin, and buried him in the paupers' corner in the graveyard without even a prayer. And many a Sunday have I sat shivering in my rags, crouched under the south side of the poorhouse, that I might get the little warmth of the winter sun and hear the church bells ring three miles away; and I knew the rich, in their silks and their warm garments, were walking up the carpeted aisle and seating themselves in their cushioned pews and thanking God for their blessings, while the minister told them of His love for man; but three miles away we paupers were starving and freezing."

"What did ye do in the poorhouse?" asked the Trapper.

"We made baskets and brooms and whiplashes," answered the man. "And the man who kept us sold what we made and kept the money, while we starved."

“Friend,” said the Trapper,—upon whose mind the vivid description of his strange guest was making a profound impression,—“the man who kept ye was a thief. The Lord will gin it to him in the Judgment. I sartinly hope I may be there when He takes the vagabond in hand; perhaps I can git a lick at him off and on, in the scrimmage.”

“He was a church member, John Norton,” said the man.

The quiet but intense bitterness and sarcasm with which the simple words were said were lost on the comprehension of the Trapper, for his mind did not understand the relationship and the obligations of charity which were included in it. For a moment he was silent. Then looking at his guest with a puzzled expression on his face, he calmly said:—

“I don’t understand ye, friend.”

The man was not slow to perceive the confusion in the Trapper’s mind, or his total ignorance of the church as an institution in civilized communities from whence it sprang; but, fearing that he might be mistaken should he assume the Trapper’s entire ignorance of such a relation, he asked:—

“Do you know what a church is, John Norton?”

“There’s a preachin’ station down in the valley of the Mohawk, at the south eend of the woods, where I heerd a missionary preach four year ago; but I didn’t conceit he knowed jest what he was sayin’, for he yelled like an Injun in an ambushment, and acted sorter onnateral-like in his talkin’. Me and the pups did the best we could to foller the trail of his arguin’; but we couldn’t exactly tell where he fetched up, nor the idee the council had when it broke up. No, I don’t conceit I know what a church member is. Leastwise, the missionary didn’t make it clear to me down on the Mohawk.”

“A church member, John Norton, is a man who professes to love God; who professes to love men; and,” the man continued bitterly, “the keeper of the poorhouse, who starved us and stole our earnings, was a church member.”

“The man was a vagabond!” exclaimed the Trapper. “I git the idee now. I caught a church member, as ye call him, on the line of my traps over there under White Face only a month ago. I had seed his tracks off and on ever sence I blazed the line through, and I

knowed he was a church member by the way he walked; for he didn't walk straight and honest-like, like-a man who made the line and had a right to be on it, but he sorter sneaked along and stopped behind stuns and trees as ef he knowed he was doin' the devil's arrant, and was afeared an honest man might ketch him at it.

“ I bore the thievin's of the scamp until it got onreasonable, and I made an ambush fur him by an otter slide. I sot a big bear-trap at the bottom of the slide, and I burrowed into the ground at the top, and I put the leaves and the mosses and some dried sticks over my head in a jedicious manner, so I doubt ef even a Huron could have seed the trick of the thing. I knowed he'd come to the top of the slide in his thievin' sarch for an honest man's skins, and sure enough he did. Yis, he come to the top of the slide so I could tech him with the muzzle of my rifle, and he bent over to look at the trap in the water, and he found it—yis, he found it; fur I jest reached out the muzzle of my rifle, and I gin him a punch in the back that sent him down the slide as ef the devil was arter him; and the trap took good hold at the bottom, and I had the vagabond in the jedgment fur sure.”

“What did you do to him?” said the man, whose face showed that he sensed both the humor of the old man’s blunder as to what constituted a church member, and also the predicament of the thief.

“I preached to him,” said the Trapper. “Yis, I preached to the scamp. I made him say the Commandments with the muzzle of my rifle to quicken his mem’ry, and the vagabond showed good mem’ry, fur sartin’, fur he started at the be-ginnin’ fair and square, and he went through to the eend without a slip; which I sartinly doubt I could do, although I be an honest man; and he didn’t lose any time in puttin’ the words in either; but I conceit that the water and the rifle helped the vagabond, not to speak of the trap. Arter he had said the Commandments, I helped him out and eased off the trap, and we had a leetle more talkin’, not to speak of a leetle actin’ that I throwed in without any charge.”

“What did you do to him?” said the man, whose face was now thoroughly relaxed in evident enjoyment of the Old Trapper’s experience.

“I cut a withe,” said the Trapper, “and I larnt him what the Commandments meant, and

what a vagabond can expect when he breaks 'em. I eddicated him a few minits better'n any missioner could, fur he owned up before the withe got limber that he knowed the wickedness of stealin', and he swore he'd never tech another man's skins while he lived on the 'arth; but I don't conceit he kept his word, fur ye could see by the look of his eyes he was a nateral liar as well as a thief; and I dare say he's sellin' skins to-day in the settlements that he never trapped. But he never put his thievin' foot on that line agin, and I doubt ef he'll ever tech another fur in a trap that has ' John Norton ' on it."

This episode had evidently been a relief to the feelings of the stranger, for his face had lost its set expression, and the gloom on his brow had given place to a peaceful light. He could evidently recall his past without pain,—dire as it had been,—and speak of it without bitterness, for in a moment he turned brightly to the Old Trapper, and asked:—

"Would you like to know how I came to leave the poorhouse, John Norton?"

"Sartinly," answered the Trapper. "Sartinly. Ye was in the devil's own hole, fur sure, and atween the church member and the straw, and

the starvin', and the freezin', ye had a hard time on it, as I conceit. Yis, ye had a hard time on it, and I would sartinly like to hear how the Lord of marcy got ye out of the scrape."

"You may well say the Lord of mercy, John Norton," answered the man, "for He did it; but He did it through my natural gifts, through the powers He had given me,— the powers that had come to me from Him through the mother and the father I have never seen, whose love and whose name I have alike missed."

"I don't understand ye," said the Trapper.

"I will tell you," said the man. "I was born with the love of knowledge in me, John Norton, — the love to know how things were made, and how things could be made. I used to open the nuts that I might know how the shells were constructed, and from what point the kernel started to grow. I used to split the apples open before I ate them to find which way their seeds lay, and to learn how they grew round the center. And I used to wonder what colored their skins, and made them so red and bright. I used to lie by the ant-hills in the warm sun, and see the little busy things come and go, and noticed how they carried their loads; and I longed to get inside of

their mounds and see what they did,—how they made their chambers, and kept their archways from falling. I have lain by the hour in the leaves, and seen the great yellow spiders weave their webs, and hang their filmy traps in the air that they might catch their food. I climbed a thousand trees and studied a thousand nests, and found that each bird had his own way and fashion of making his home, and saw that they could do things that man could not do; for I used to work for hours trying to place the hairs and the mosses, the bits of bark and the stolen string, as the bird would place them, and I found I could not do it, John Norton.”

“No,” said the Trapper; “the creeturs that the Lord has made be wiser than men arter their fashion. Man can trap a beaver, but he can’t build his mound; and a wolf will find a way when the hunter and the hound both will lose themselves in the woods. Yis, the creeturs the Lord has made be wiser than men.”

“It is even so,” said the man; “and as a boy I grew to know it. I did not know at the time that I was a student, but I studied much before I saw a book.”

“I don’t doubt it,” said the Trapper. “Books

be good enough in their way, but I never seed more than two or three men that had studied books that wasn't dreadfully ignorant."

"I don't know about that," returned the man; "books contain the knowledge of the world. Books are the mirrors that reflect the learning of the ages. Books are treasure-houses in which are stored the golden sayings of all times. The first joy that came to my life, John Norton, was when I learned to read. An old pauper woman in the poorhouse taught me the letters; and the first book that I read was the Bible."

"It was a good book to begin with, fur sartin," said the Trapper.

"It is a good book to end with, too," said the man.

"It may be," said the Trapper; "but the church member in the trap knew the Commandments, word for word."

The allusion of the Trapper was unnoticed by his guest. At least, he resumed his conversation as if it had not been made.

"The first book I read was the Bible. It took me a year to read it through, but it made the year happy. I read it, not for its wisdom, but for the strange stories that were in it, and

the things that delight a boy; but when I was done I knew how to read, and I had a longing to read — a longing I cannot describe. Did you ever long to know a thing, John Norton?"

"Sartin," answered the Trapper; " I run acrost a track in the snow last winter that made me oneasy; fur the track was the track of a panther, but it walked with the legs of a man; leastwise, it made but one track where it ought to make two. And the pups was oneasy too; fur they wouldn't foller the thing. I trailed it fur two days, fur I had sot my mind on knowin' what the creetur was that the pups wouldn't foller, and whose track didn't tell me his name. And the second day, jest as it was gittin' dark, I come upon him; and it was standin' up like a man, and I must say it started me a leetle; fur I come on it suddenly, and met it face to face. But I drawed on it, fur I was sartin it wasn't anything human; and I lined the sights to send the lead atween the eyes. My finger was on the trigger, and the pressure was gittin' steady, fur I'd never seed sech a thing afore, and I was detarmined to know what the creetur was, and " —

"What was it, John Norton?" exclaimed the man, excitedly; for the narration of the Old

Trapper's strange experience had startled him, as it well might. For who could guess what a creature might be whose track was the track of a panther, but that walked with the legs of a man? And at the point at which the Trapper—standing face to face with the strange creature—was about to explode his piece, he was unable to restrain his curiosity longer, and had broken in upon the Trapper's narration suddenly, with the question, “What was it, John Norton?”

CHAPTER III.

“A FOOL of a half-breed!” answered the Trapper, evidently enjoying the curiosity of his guest. “Yis, a downright fool who conceited in his craziness that he was an animil, and so wouldn’t dress himself like a rational bein’, but had managed to git himself inside of a panther’s skin, and he had done it clever, too, fur even his face was covered with the pelt; and ef he hadn’t opened his mouth, and let out a stream of his gibberin’ as I drawed on him, he’d found his senses in etarnity, quick as powder could barn — fur, dusky as it was, I’d got the line right, and my finger was gittin’ heavy on the trigger. Yis, his gibberin’ saved him, fur he sartinly looked like the animil whose skin he wore in the place of clothes, and the panthers and me have a sort of runnin’ account, and I wipe the slate — as the storekeepers say in the settlements — as often as I git a chance.”

“What did you do with him, John Norton?” asked the man.

“Do with him?” exclaimed the Trapper: “I

couldn't do anything with him. Ye see he was crazy as a loon, and he hadn't no sense. Ye couldn't git him to talk like a knowin' person, but he'd howl and screech and gibber and jump round ye, and squat down and make a spring at ye as ef the old feller himself was in him. And I sartinly guess he was by the way he acted. Did ye ever see a crazy person, friend?"

"Yes, we had three lunatics in the poor-house," replied the man.

"I don't understand ye," said the Trapper.

"I said," returned the man, "we had three crazy folks in the poorhouse."

"Sartin, sartin, I understand," returned the Trapper. "No, it don't make much difference what ye call 'em; one name's as good as another, when a man has lost his senses, fur all that's worth namin' has sorter gone out of him. I shouldn't wonder ef *lunatics* was a pretty good name fur 'em; but we call 'em crazy folks here in the woods. But don't ye forgit to tell me how ye got out of the poorhouse, fur atween the straw and the starvin' and the church member and the *lunatics*, ye must have had an infarnal time, and I'd like to know how ye got out of it."

"It came about in this way," said the man:

“it was the law of the town that when any pauper child reached the age of fourteen, he should be apprenticed to some trade by the town authorities, or should be bound out to a farmer, unless he was adopted into some family where his support should be guaranteed. Well, I had lived two years in the poorhouse, and the time had come for me to be sent out. And one day in early spring I was sitting on the south side of the house, whittling. I used to whittle a great deal. I had a great knack in making things with the knife,—you know some boys have a great knack at whittling?”

“Sartinly,” said the Trapper. “There’s a man up in the St. Regis that they say has been whittlin’ for more’n fifty year steady. A trapper that I met on Deadwood was tellin’ me, this fall; that he knowed him. And he said that he would whittle all the time; that he’d stop in his eatin’, and go to whittlin’; that he’d git up in the middle of the night and go to whittlin’. And he said—but I conceit he may have stretched it a leetle—that the man started to go down to the store one mornin’ and that about half the way down there was an old pipperidge stump. Well, he come along to this stump. Ye see he’d seed

it a good many times, and had a kind of a hankerin' to git at it. So when he got in front of this stump, he stopped and begun to look at it, and arter he had looked at it fur a few minits sorter 'arnest-like, he fetched his jackknife out of his pocket, and arter rubbin' it a few times up and down on the calf of his boot to git the edge right, he began to whittle at the stump. Did ye ever whittle a bit of pipperidge, friend?"

"I don't think I ever did," said the man.

"Well," responded the Trapper, "then ye have no idee what pipperidge wood is. I made a ramrod once of pipperidge, and it took me nigh all winter off and on to dress the pesky thing smooth. And arter I'd got it all right, and polished it off with a bit of sanded buckskin, I sot it up agin the edge of the table; and, in less than two minits, Rover,—he was a pup, then,—who was cuttin' up his antics round the room, run agin that ramrod and broke it square off in the middle."

"What did you do then?" asked the stranger, laughing as much at the expression on the Trapper's face as at the humor of his experience.

"I didn't do anything," responded the Trapper. "Ye see, there wasn't anything I could

do that would sort of relieve me. There's some feelin's that a man can express; but there be some that ye can't git out of ye in words. Then I had a kind of an idee ef I said anything I might git mad; for I was a good deal riled inwardly, and I think talkin' sorter helps a man to git mad when he is riled; and the less ye say under sech sarcumstances the better, I conceit."

"Perhaps it is," said the man. "But what did the man do who started to whittle the pepperidge stump?"

"Remember, I don't vouch that it's gospel truth I'm tellin' ye; fur I had it second-hand-like, and I've noted that things that come second-hand be very apt to git a good deal mixed. But the trapper that camped with me on Deadwood said that the man whittled at that stump all day, and then he built a fire and whittled at it all night, and that when his wife come to look him up,—fur she was a leetle worried what had become of him,—he sent her back arter some vict'als, and jest camped down on that stump and whittled at it nigh on to a week, until he had whittled it clean down to the roots; and then went down to the store and got him the pound

of sugar he started for, and went back home as ef nothin' had happened."

"Well," said the man laughing, and his poor, thin face, marked with its lines of strength and its lines of weakness alike, took the finest illumination when he smiled, "I don't think I ever whittled like the man the trapper told you about; but I used to love to whittle, and I have made many curious things with my jackknife. And one day, as I was saying, I was sitting on the south side of the poorhouse, whittling. I was making a top that I could spin in the air. It was hollow inside, and I cut holes in it through which the air could enter in a strong current when in revolution, and other holes through which it could pass out. And I found that these holes might be cut in such a way that the top would make a very pleasant sound when it was spinning; and it used to spin a great while, and it would go up a great ways into the air, and the longer it went the faster it spun."

"Lord!" said the Trapper, "that was funny. I should eenamost think ye might have made one that would never have stopped."

"I thought so, too, John Norton," said the man, "I thought so, too. And I really think.

it might be done; but I am not certain. I've come so nigh doing a great many things, and missed them after all, that I am not so positive as I used to be."

"That's it, friend," said the Trapper; "years makes a man onsartin about a good many things that seemed easy when he was younger."

"It is true," responded the man gravely, "we learn the limitations of our powers only after many trials; but I have noticed, and I often tell Lucky, that what is impossible at one period of a man's existence becomes easy for him to do at another. And it may be that by and by, if a man keeps learning and trying and gaining power, he will be able to do everything he undertakes."

"That looks reasonable, fur sartin," said the Trapper. "I shouldn't wonder," continued the old man with the slyest of all twinkles in his eyes, "I shouldn't wonder ef ye made a top in etarnity as big as a barrel or a shanty and set it goin' so it would never fetch up."

The man was too profoundly engaged in discussing in his mind the possibilities of his invention to notice the humorous incredulity of the Trapper's remark. And after a moment's pause,

during which he stooped and caressed the head of his dog, he resumed:—

“I was sitting one day, as I was telling you, south of the poorhouse, in the sun, whittling out a top, when a man came through the gate into the yard, and, stopping in front of me, asked me what I was doing? I told him I was making me a top. He looked at it curiously for a moment and said, ‘This is a very queer looking top, my boy. I don’t understand the principle on which you are making it.’

“‘I don’t know what you mean by principle, sir,’ I said, ‘but it will spin very fast, and it will spin in the air, and I can almost make it sing a tune.’

“‘I never saw a top spin in the air,’ returned the man. ‘I don’t think yours will. If it will, I will give you a name for it.’

“‘It will spin in the air,’ I said, jumping up and setting the spring, ‘see here!’ and I sent it up into the air with all the strength I could command. And it went up, and up, and up.”

“Heavens and ’arth!” said the Trapper, “did it actu’lly go out of sight? Ye orter have invented somethin’ with which to pull the thing

down arter a while, or it would be a kind of losin' operation to spin 'em, fur sartin."

"Oh," said the man, "it came down after a while; but what seemed to astonish the gentleman most was that it played one set of tunes going up, and another set of tunes coming down."

"Yer top was a good deal like human bein's," said the Trapper.

"Perhaps so," said the man, smiling pleasantly into the face of his host; "but be that as it may, the gentleman was very much astonished, and he said that I had not only made a top, but discovered a new principle of aërial pressure,—a principle of great value, he said, not only for the entertainment of the young, but with possible industrial uses in its application which would be of commercial value; and he said he'd name the top according to the principles and results it suggested, and he called it the 'Aërial Melaphonal Top.'"

"Lord!" said the Trapper, "that was a ripper of a name. I think he orter have done somethin' fur ye arter givin' sech a name to yer top."

"He did!" said the man, earnestly. "He did more for me than any man that ever lived."

“What did he do fur ye?” queried the Trapper.

“He took me from the poorhouse, and he took me to his home, and that home he gave to me; and in it I had joy, and in it I had suffering; and the joy was the finest I ever had, and the pain was the sharpest I ever felt. But the joy I had came from his strength, and the pain I had came from my weakness. Yes, he took me from the poorhouse, and he gave me a home. Do you know what a home is, John Norton?”

“Sartin,” responded the Trapper; “here be a home.” And the old man looked affectionately at the two hounds, and then he looked at the wall from which the two picture-frames hung,—the one filled and the other empty,—and he repeated as if more to himself than to his guest:—

“Sartin; here be a home.”

The stranger’s eye had followed the direction of the Trapper’s glance as he looked at the hounds, and also as the old man lifted his eyes to the wall on which the filled and empty picture-frames were hanging. His eyes lingered on the frames for a moment, and in the quickness of his sympathy he sensed the circumstances suggested by the face of Herbert, and the empty

frame hanging by its side, and the loving glance which the old man had given them, and he said, speaking to his host:—

“Yours?”

“Yis, the boys be mine,” said the Trapper.

“One alive and one dead?”

“The boys be both livin’,” said the Trapper.

“Where are they?” asked the man.

“Henry camps in the settlements,” responded the Trapper. “The Lad camps higher up.”

There was a pause for a moment, and then the two men, so unlike in appearance, so unlike in fact, so unlike in opinions, so widely apart in education, both seasoned with years and white-headed, looked involuntarily into each other's eyes a moment, and then the stranger said:—

“I understand.”

And then there was another pause.

Not an unpleasant study for an artist: the two aged men looking into the firelight, and looking beyond the firelight with the far-sightedness of untechnical but profoundest faith. The great logs all aglow. The hounds sleeping on the hearth. The stranger's dog sitting erect, with his large, bright eyes on the face of his master. The flashes of firelight flaming and fading on the

wall, and playing hide-and-seek with the shadows in the corner; and through the window a glimpse of the white world outside,—the moon in the cold blue sky and the scintillating stars shining brightly down.

For several minutes the silence lasted, and then the stranger said:—

“ You have found a home, John Norton, where most find only a hut; for you have brought love into it, and the angels of heaven would be homeless in the celestial mansions if love was not with them in the places of their abode. And in the dwelling of the man who took me from the poor-house I found love,—the love between husband and wife, which I had never seen; the love of parents for a child, and the child’s love for parents,—nor had I ever seen that before. And I found more, John Norton. I could not believe it at first, it was so strange: love for the outcast; love for the pauper; love for the boy whose father and mother were in the depths of the sea, and who had found kicks and curses and cruelty from the time he was old enough to be kicked and cursed and ill-treated, but had never found love;” and here the man broke down, his lips twitched, and for a moment he struggled against

his feelings, and then he placed his long, thin fingers over his face, rested his elbows on his knees, and wept. His mute companion lifted his muzzle to the thin hands spread over the face and lapped the tears that fell through between the thin fingers, and trickled down the back of the thin hands.

The Trapper never even looked towards his guest; he even, with the innate modesty of true reverence, half averted his face as if he would not intrude even with a glance into the sacred inclosure of the man's griefs. After a while the man raised his head, wiped the tears from his eyes with the sleeve of his coat, placed both hands on either side of his dog's face, and caressed him for a moment, saying:—

“ Lucky, you are a good dog. Lucky, you are the best dog in the world;” and then to the Trapper, “ John Norton, you will overlook the exhibition of my weakness. I am not as strong as I used to be, and the memories of that far-off and happy time I had in the home of my benefactor overcame me.”

“ Friend,” said the Trapper, “ I've lived nigh on to eighty year, and I've consorted with many people, and I've seed the joys and sorrers of my

kind, and I've seed strong men weep like women ; and there be grief that is stronger than courage, and the tears that be honest be fur a man's honor, and I honor ye in yer grief, and I respect ye in yer sorrers. I trust ye found the home of the man that took ye in a pleasant place to live in."

"I did, I did!" exclaimed the man. "Only He that seeth all things, and knoweth the feelings of all hearts, knoweth the joys that I found in that house ; for there I found books and opportunities of learning, and I became as a son to my benefactor, and there I lived ten years, and in those ten years I found the possibilities of heaven. I studied, and learned, and grew wise. The man was a scholar himself, and he taught me all his wisdom, — and his wisdom was not only the wisdom of learning, but the wisdom of knowing and of inventing, and at that I was quicker than he ; and together we explored the secrets of nature, and mingled its forces in skillful combination, and directed their strength in a hundred ways for our amusement, and for human good. With him I found what was in the air, and in the earth, and in the subtle elements that are not named. And we gave names to

these elements that were not known, and we gave forms to powers that were not embodied, for man's amusement and for man's benefit, and we found startling things, John Norton,—things in the air and the water that no one knew."

"I don't understand what ye could find out in water," said the Old Trapper; "that is, anything that ordinary folks don't see."

"John Norton," exclaimed the man, "do you know what is in water?"

"There is a spring over on Silver Mountain, at the foot of the ledge, that I run acrost last year as I was fetchin' my trail through from the St. Lawrence, the bottom of which was as yaller as a turnup. It was gettin' on toward night, and, as the spring run a good stream out of it, I conceited I'd better camp down there. It had been a good deal of a tramp, for I'd been takin' up a line, and I had twenty or thirty pelts and nigh on to as many traps on my back, to say nothin' of the flour and ven'son and the camp fixin's in the pack. Well, I threw up a brush shanty and started a fire and dipped up a pail of water and set it to bilin', fur I thought I'd stir in a few leaves of the tea that Henry brought in last summer; fur the yarb takes powerful hold on me,

and I felt sorter ga'nt — a good deal like a canister when the powder is out of it. So I stirred in the tea and steeped it jediciously, and arter I had briled and eat the ven'son, and felt sorter full-like inside, I sot down fur a good, cheerful drink. I cooled the cup to the right p'int and took a mouthful, but there didn't a drop of it git further than my back teeth, fur I shet down on it sudden as a hammer falls when the spring is a strong un, and the trigger works quick to the finger."

"What was there in it?" exclaimed the man.

"The devil was in it!" said the Old Trapper; "yis, the devil was in it, ef a man can jedge from the taste; fur that water was full enough of sulphur to physic the settlements fur a year."

"You found a sulphur spring, John Norton," said the man, laughing heartily at the description that the Trapper had given of his experience; "you found a sulphur spring, and sulphur has great remedial qualities in it."

"I didn't notice any sech thing in it," said the Trapper, evidently in the dark as to what the term implied; "I didn't find any sech thing in it, but it may have been there all the same, fur I don't know how them things taste; and ef ye

say they was there, I won't dispute ye, but it was infarnal drinkin', fur sartin. I moved on over the ridge afore I breakfasted, till I came to the river of the Tumblin' Falls, where me and the pups found a good healthy drink, and sech as is nateral fur man and beast to quench their thirst with. But ye was speakin' about somethin' ye found in the water. What did ye find in the water?"

"We found," said the man, "that every drop of water was a world in itself."

"It can't be, it can't be!" said the Trapper, "fur a man would drink the univarse up swal-lerin' at that rate."

"You don't understand," said the man: "it is a figure of speech that I use; and I said that every drop of water was a world, because it is full of living creatures,— things that creep and swim and have eyes and a structure,— true organisms."

"Now, ye look here, friend," said the Trapper, "ye be a leetle careful-like in yer speech, fur what ye say is beyend reason, leastwise techin' the waters in the woods here. It may be as ye say techin' the streams in the settlements, fur I've noticed that men spile the Creator's work, and it may be that in the towns they do

spile the water that the Lord has made fur man's comfort. But there ain't no live things in the spring back of the cabin here, fur it's pure and clear and sweet, and ye can go in the darkest night and drink of it without fear, fur it's a flowin' stream, and it comes from the cleft of the rock, and there was never a wiggler found in any sech water, as the pups will tell ye; fur they and me have drank of it by day and night, and we orter know."

"We won't discuss it," said the man, yielding good-naturedly and mildly to the Trapper's earnestness; "but I have a glass in my pocket with which I will show you what is in the water sometime — and the water of the spring you speak of, too, pure as it is. And we found, also, secrets in the air — forces and powers full of terrible strength."

"That seems reasonable," said the Trapper, "fur many a time have I seed the power of the Lord in the air. I've seed Him set it on fire ontill the heavens flamed like the Jedgegment; and I've heerd His pieces explode louder than cannons when the battle is hot and the gunners ram home a double charge. And I've seed the fires of the north flare up as ef the eend of the world was

barnin', ontill the pups shivered with fear. Yis, I know there be powers in the air beyend the power of man, but they be powers of the Lord, and sech as man cannot diskiver and the tongue of man may not name."

"But they can be named, John Norton, and they can be discovered, and my benefactor and I analyzed the air and found what was in it, and we could separate its elements and bring its mysteries to light. The fires of the north, as you call them, are a wonder, and science, it is true, has not as yet discovered their cause; but there is nothing in nature that man cannot discover if he be patient and studious enough in searching for the key that unlocks its mysteries."

The Old Trapper had followed the speech of his guest with the greatest attention. The inquisitiveness of his own mind, which had found a narrower and ruder sphere of exercise, was nevertheless of so high an order that he could appreciate the same quality in the mind of another, although the field of exercise had been widely different from his own.

"Ye seem to have had a happy time of it in yer studyin' with yer friend. How long did ye stay in the family?"

"I stayed ten years," said the man.

"Was there any children in the family?" asked the Trapper.

"There was one child. Only one child," repeated the man; but no one who did not hear the words spoken could conceive the tenderness of the tone with which he spoke; and no one who did not see his countenance, as he said, "Only one child," could imagine that into a face of such peculiar appearance could come an expression at once so supremely gentle and so supremely sad.

The Old Trapper was evidently puzzled how to continue the conversation, for he saw that his question had called up, if not unpleasant, at least sorrowful, memories in the mind of his guest, and his breeding was too fine in its natural courtesy, and his sympathies already elicited by the singular biography to which he had listened, too profound for his strange guest, sitting in front of him, to permit him to say, unless inadvertently, a single word that would be an intrusion upon the secrets of his life.

The man had fallen into a musing mood, and silence reigned in the cabin. The fire burned low. The great logs, nearly consumed, weakened

in the middle and fell downward into the warm ashes and the glowing coals underneath, with many a spark and jet of flame. At length the man roused himself from his reverie, and said:—

“The motions of the mind are wonderful, John Norton, and thought is swifter than light. Sitting here in your cabin, in the midst of the wilderness, with a stretch of forty years intervening, my mind has journeyed back to the house of my benefactor. Again, have I seen the face of his wife, who was to me as a mother; again have I heard his voice as it sounded in my ears long ago; and again have I seen, with all the vividness of her earthly appearance, when she was young and beautiful, the bright being that made the house in which we lived full of light and joy,—the being that made me ambitious in my studies; whose hand waved me with encouraging gesture from knowledge to knowledge, and whose presence kindled the darkness of my life into the radiance of hope. But the night is far spent, and I have kept you from your slumber. Some other time I will resume my story, if you desire to hear the tale of my life further. If you will give me a blanket, Lucky and I will sleep here by the fire. I doubt

if among all the deeds you have done in your life, John Norton, you have ever done a deed of greater goodness than you have done this night ; for you have given a man and his dog that were hungry the food that they needed. They were freezing, and you have warmed them. They were without shelter, and you received them to your house. They were lonely, and you have cheered them with your companionship. Two of His creatures have you comforted, and the Lord will give you your reward in the great day."

All this was said gravely, and with that dignity of manner which the simplicity of true, heartfelt gratitude gives to its utterance. Before speaking, the man had risen from the chair, and, as he closed, he bowed to the Trapper, as one who would thus show his appreciation for the favors he had received ; while Lucky, the dog, moved in front of the Trapper's chair, and, fixing his eyes on the old man's face, wagged his tail gladly, as if he, too, would make some acknowledgment to his master's host.

"Ye be welcome, friend," said the Trapper, rising from his seat. "Ye be welcome to what ye have had, and ye be welcome to stay so long

as ye will. The days be short and the nights long, and at times it be a leetle lonely, though the pups be good company, and the boys come and see me off and on. There be skins in the cabin fit fur a king to sleep on, and yer bed shall be of the softest."

So saying, the Trapper placed a great roll of bearskins on the floor, and, bringing a blanket from his own bed and a pillow for his guest, he retired to his couch, from which the coming of the man had, hours before, aroused him.

The man spread the skins in front of the fire, and, adjusting the pillow, he gathered the blankets around him and prepared himself for slumber. His dog came to his side, sat down for a moment on his haunches, looked into his master's face, kissed it with his tongue, looked at the fire, wagged his tail happily, and stretched himself by his master's side. The man placed one arm around the body of the dog and yielded his senses to repose. The Trapper, lying on his bed with his eyes on the two picture-frames, also prepared for sleep. And so the two men — the one gazing at the objects which suggested the presence of those he loved, one on the earth and one above, but to his simple faith both equally alive ;

— the other with his arm over the body of his dog, whose love had made him the companion of his wanderings, and the companion, too, in his wants, — fell asleep.

Outside, the world was white and cold and still. No stain on the earth, no cloud in the sky, no sign in all the white expanse below, or the blue expanse overhead, that Nature was conscious of human wants or human woes. But above the sky sat One who saw not only the two men sleeping in the cabin, the hounds on the hearth, the dog by his master's side, but all on the earth, whether waking or sleeping, whether happy or sad ;— not only saw, but carried in His bosom their cares, their losses, and their sorrows, as if they were His own.

CHAPTER IV.

IT was nigh on to a month before "The Man Who Missed It" again alluded to his experiences. Indeed, he had not been physically well; the labors, and, above all, the repeated misfortunes of his life, had, beyond doubt, materially affected his vital powers. And it was evident that, previous to his finding the Trapper's cabin, he had passed through a period of perhaps aimless wandering, during which, without positive design, he had strayed beyond the region of the settlements which fringed the wilderness, and penetrated into its depths utterly unprovided for such a serious journey. Exposure by day and night to the storms that beat upon him, and the winds whose chilling blasts pierced his thin and scanty garments, in connection with lack of sleep and lack of food, had served to lessen still more the little strength which the adverse struggle of his life had left him. Indeed, he might well be likened to some ship which, for half a century, had been put to hardest service, and which had not only borne for years the buffeting

of many tempests, but had been weakened through all its structure by the insidious influence of a climate that had sapped the strength of its timbers, and, while it had, indeed, been blown to a tranquil harbor by the gale which threatened its destruction, it had, nevertheless, entered in such condition that those who knew it best felt doubtful whether it would ever again leave the haven between whose headlands it had found the sorely needed refuge.

The day following the conversation which we have narrated in the preceding chapters found the Trapper's guest not only indisposed to talk, but even indisposed to move. He rose from his slumber with the looks of a man who rises unrefreshed. He ate but little at breakfast, and, after the meal was finished, he took his seat in the easy-chair at one end of the great hearthstone, as if his weakness, long resisted by effort of his will, had overpowered him at length, and compelled him to quiet. He even dozed as he sat in the chair, sleeping for a few moments, and then rousing himself with a sudden start. At last he said, turning toward the Trapper in an apologetic and deprecating tone:—

“I trust, John Norton, you will excuse my

inattention to the duties and what might be the pleasures of the day, but I am very tired. I have not slept much lately, and that probably accounts for the feeling which possesses me. I feel as if I would like to sleep forever, if it wasn't for Lucky here. Lucky," said he, speaking to his dog, "if it wasn't for you, Lucky, I would like to go to sleep and sleep forever."

The dog, whom the night's sleep had fully refreshed, rubbed his head against the knee of his master, and then, putting his paws in his lap, stretched his mouth to his master's cheek, and caressed it with his tongue.

The man put both arms around the neck of his dog, laid his face against his shoulder, and when he lifted his head the Trapper noticed that tears had fallen into the shaggy coat.

"I tell ye what I think ye'd better do, friend," said the Trapper; "ye had better go to sleep. Ye look to me like a man that has been on a long trail, which has led principally up hill, and the tramp has been a leetle too much fur ye, and natur has sorter gin out. Yis, what ye want is sleep, and my advice to ye is to jest take to the skins agin, and sleep it out ef it takes a week. Ye won't be distarbed, fur the pups and

me be quiet folks, and the neighbors ain't plenty. Yis, ye'd better turn in and sleep it out, that's my advice."

"May I sleep as long as I want to?" said the man,—and he spoke as a boy speaks when asking the greatest of favors — "may I sleep as long I want to?" he repeated, looking the Old Trapper in the face, and rising feebly from his chair.

"Sartin, sartin," answered the Trapper; "there's four good months afore the trout be movin' in the rapids, or the big uns' will strike a hook in the lake. Yis, ye've sartinly got time enough; that is, ef ye don't lose any time in gittin' at it. So jest bunk down in the skins with yer dog, and me and the pups will run the cabin while ye are sorter enjoyin' yerself."

The man needed no second bidding. He made him a bed of skins at one end of the cabin, and, throwing himself upon them, in less than a minute his senses were locked in profound repose. The dog went to the Old Trapper, looked into his face, wagged his tail happily, gave a gleeful jump and twist of his body, and then trotting to the couch of skins he curled himself up beside his master, and went to sleep himself. But if his master moved even to the least degree,

the dog's eyes came open with a snap. He would lift himself on his forward legs and look attentively into his master's face for a moment, then curl down and close his eyes again.

"That's a knowin' dog," said the Trapper, "ef his bristles be stiff. It was a most onrational cross, fur sartin, and no sensible hunter would resk it. Fur the dog of blood is the only one to depend on when the ground be dry, the chase long, and meat scarce. Yis, the cross was sartinly onreasonable; but the dog is a good un, ef he does look like thunder."

The object of these critical and humorous remarks knew beyond doubt that he was alluded to; for, as the Old Trapper closed, he opened one eye and fastened the bright orb on the Old Trapper's face, while the other remained shut, and he gave the floor two or three inquisitive thumps with his tail. A more quizzical look certainly was never seen on a dog's face, nor, taken in connection with the look, a more humorous wag of the tail.

The Trapper stood and gazed steadily for several seconds at his guest's queer companion. He even closed one eye himself as if he would return the humor he received, and then his great

face began to wrinkle, and the smile, beginning at the corners of his mouth, clomb up the deepening lines as a boy, laughing as he goes, climbs the rounds of a ladder, until it found a lodgment in his eyes, whence it remained looking quizzically and gleefully out. The longer he looked at the dog the more the smile deepened, until it burst into a laugh. His mouth opened to its widest stretch, and, placing a hand on either knee, he indulged his silent mirth to the utmost. A strange spectacle, truly, to see a man and a dog thus exchanging humor; but that the animal enjoyed the passage of fun was evident; for the orb which was fastened on the Trapper's face grew brighter and brighter as the pantomime proceeded, and the stumpy tail wagged its sympathetic appreciation with increasing heartiness.

It was evident that the Trapper doubted his ability to longer restrain his mirth; and fearful lest he should disturb his guest, who was still asleep, he slid out of the door, saying in mirthful gasps:—

“The cross—is sartinly—on-rea-son-able; but the dog—is a good—un!” and once outside the door, indulged his pent-up feelings to the fullest extent.

Thus several weeks passed, and the exhausted frame of his guest, ministered unto by nourishing food, and perhaps by what was better, abundant sleep, recovered to a great degree its strength; and with the improvement to his physical health was observable, also, an equal improvement in the tone of his feelings and the hopefulness of his spirit. He had in the mean time talked with the Trapper on many themes, and showed himself in his conversations to be a scholar of profound attainments; but not once had he ever alluded to his past life. And the Trapper forbore, from a sense of native delicacy, to question him concerning himself. He had not only shown himself a good talker, but a good listener also; and many were the tales connected alike with war and peace with which the Trapper had entertained him in the long evenings as they sat by the fire together. It is doubtful if two men were ever before brought together who could give each unto the other such instruction and entertainment. For the worlds in which they had lived, and whose lessons they had learned, were entirely unlike, and the knowledge and experience of each were equally novel and interesting to the other. Thus the two men, both ripened

with years and both wise in their way, brought strangely together, became intimate companions. Their mutual respect deepened into friendship as they sat in the long evenings exchanging their opinions and their experiences; and by Christmas-time it would not be too much to say each seemed to the other like a lifelong acquaintance, and not as men who one short month before saw each other's face for the first time.

It was Christmas Eve. The Trapper and his guest were sitting in front of the great roaring fire. The hounds were on the hearth, and the stranger's dog by his knee. The Trapper had noticed that his guest had been in an unusual mood during the day. Now he had been restless, walking about the cabin, going to the narrow window, looking out as if he expected to see some one approach; and then he would seat himself in his chair, and, resting his chin in his hand, gaze fixedly upon the floor, lost in profound abstraction. But as the day declined, and evening came on, a more gentle and solemn mood took possession of his spirit, causing the prevalent expression of his countenance to be one of sadness.

The Old Trapper had refrained from noticing

the peculiar disquietude of his guest, and even now continued to forego the customary conversation lest he should disturb the musings of his friend. Thus the two men sat on Christmas Eve in front of the great fire, silently gazing into it.

“It’s thirty years ago to-night,” the stranger said, speaking at last; and he said it as if speaking more to himself than his companion, “it’s thirty years ago to-night since she passed away.” And then he said, turning to the Trapper and repeating the same words, changing the tone of his voice to one of address, “It is thirty years ago to-night, John Norton, since an event occurred which has influenced my life up to this day. Did you ever see one that you loved die, John Norton?” asked the man, looking the Trapper steadily in the face.

“I have fought on many fields,” said the old man, “and I’ve been in many a scrimmage where men fell round me like autumn leaves. I’ve seed the gineral and the privit struck down, and I’ve seed the young man and the old lie side by side; and many a comrade have I buried arter the fight was over, or the scrimmage ended. Yis; I have seed many that I loved die.”

“ I know you have been in many battles, John Norton,” replied the man, “ and I can well imagine that you have lost many friends; but did you ever lose one who was more than a friend, — one whom you loved with all the power of your being, and whom, in losing, you lost all that made life valuable?”

“ I have seed many die, both young and old,” said the Trapper evasively, “ and there be graves I shall never forget; but they died in the Lord’s app’ntment, and the Lord gave me strength to bear like a man the loneliness that their goin’ made.”

“ How did He strengthen you to bear your loneliness, John Norton?” queried the man.

“ The ways of the Lord be many,” answered the Trapper, “ and He comes and goes on trails that man cannot see. He is as the wind among the trees,— ye feel the motion, but ye see not the power. The Lad used to say that thoughts come at His biddin’, and I conceit that the Lad in his simpleness was wiser than many that be knowin’; fur more’n once when standin’ above graves I’ve had thoughts come that strengthened my heart.”

“ What thought, old man, has strengthened you most?” interrogated his companion.

“The thought of meetin’ when the ’arth is ended,” was the response.

“Do you think,” said the man, “that beyond the grave we shall meet the friends gone on before?”

“I sartinly conceit we shall,” said the Trapper.

“Do you think,” persisted the man, and his eyes shone brightly, and he made a gesture like the gesture of appeal to the Trapper, “do you think the spirits of the departed can revisit the earth, and are conscious of what we do, and say, and think?”

“It may be that they can,” answered the old man.

“I know they can!” exclaimed his companion. “I know they can! I know a spirit can return either to comfort or condemn the living.”

For a moment the Old Trapper made no reply. He looked with a steady gaze into the glowing eyes of his companion, as if inwardly debating whether the misfortunes of his life had not to a certain extent unsettled his intellect, and after a moment’s inspection he asked in a respectful tone: —

“How do you know, friend, that a spirit can return?”

“Because,” said the man, “once each year, for thirty years, has the evidence been given me. Thirty times since she passed from this earth has her bright spirit returned and made me aware of her presence. Thirty times on the same night, and at the same hour, and in the same manner, has she made me aware that the ties which bound us together are not broken, and the love that she gave me has not cooled.”

For several minutes nothing further was said; the Trapper rose and placed a couple of fresh logs on the fire and reseated himself. He had scarcely done so before his guest moved his own seat so as to bring himself face to face with the Trapper, and said:—

“Old man, for a month I have eaten at your board and slept in your cabin. I have listened to your words and observed your manner of life. I know you are wise with the wisdom that years give; and that you are good with the goodness that only comes to one who has lived honestly in the world. I have found in you what for years I have looked for in vain,—an honest man. I told you the first evening that we met a portion of my life. I will resume the narration. Listen:—

“You know what I lost in my infancy and childhood: that as a child I was without father, or mother, or name, or country, or home. I will now tell you what I missed in my youth.” So saying the man again resumed the story of his life:—

“In the house of my benefactor, as I told you, I found a home; for in it was love,—the love of husband and wife, the love of parent and the love of a child. It was a home, also, of finest mood and temper. Kindness and courtesy were the habit of the household. In the ten years that I lived in that house I never heard an unkind word or saw an exhibition of bad temper. A house with evil tempers in it, John Norton, can never be a home.”

“Ye have a jedgmatical way of lookin’ at most things, friend,” said the Trapper. “I lived in a squatter’s cabin down on the Mohawk, nigh on to forty year ago, eenamost a month, and the woman that kept the shanty made it lively for us, I can tell ye. Ye sec, she had one of them cross-grained tempers that wouldn’t stand the least bit of strain, and, bein’ naterally tough in its fiber, it made a good deal of noise when it snapped. Atween the redskins and the whites

I've heerd a good deal of rapid talkin' off and on in my life. But that woman had nateral gifts with her tongue, fur sartin; and when she fairly got at it there wasn't room enough in the shanty to hold more'n one at a time. I camped out nights fur the most part, fur she used to git wound up days, and a mighty leetle thing in the evenin' would tech her off; and when she once got agoin' the Lord of marcy Himself couldn't stop her. And yit she was pleasant and chirpy enough ef ye kept on the right side of her, but ye couldn't always tell jest where the right side was; and a man had to be mighty lively at dodgin' to keep on reasonable terms with her. Ye see, I went down to git a tech of the settlements, and become sorter civilized, fur I had heerd a good deal of the pleasant ways they had in the settlements; but a month was enough, and I came back to my cabin in the woods as contented as a bee in his hive."

"But the house in which I lived was the house of peace, John Norton," continued the man, "and such peace as only springs from affection. My benefactor was the noblest of men, and his wife was the gentlest of women. And the daughter—John Norton, do you think that angels are ever born on the earth?"

“It may be,” said the Trapper; “yis, it may be occasionally one, off and on. But they don’t come often enough to trouble a man with countin’ ’em, ef he is reasonably quick at figgers. But it may be ye found one, friend, in the house where ye lived.”

“I did! I did!” exclaimed the man, “if ever an angel was born on the earth, the daughter of my benefactor was one. In body she was beautiful beyond the beauty of most women: a beauty finer than the beauty of form, however perfect, or of feature, however regular; for hers was the beauty of mind and of spirit,—a mind that ruled the face in its expression, and a spirit that characterized the countenance with its own gentleness. Her eyes were blue as the sky you have seen at noonday, John Norton; of that peculiar blue which darkens in feeling when the life within grows intense; and all shades of expression could come to them, save of anger. I know not but that they were capable of that; I only know I never saw it in them.”

“Perhaps ye gin her no cause,” said the Trapper.

“Perhaps not,” said the man. “No, none of us gave her any cause to be angry; for we loved

her too well for that. Oh, if I could make you see her, old man! Her hair was bright as the sunshine, and almost of the same tint; as if it had the power not merely to attract the rays, but to hold them amid its wavy masses. I have seen such hair in the pictures that the old masters painted of the heavenly ones, but never in womankind since we laid the golden hair from sight, and smothered its sunshine in the grave. Her skin was white as a lily, but through the whiteness the eye could see a hint of pink which now and then came to the surface in warmest hue, when the life within was stirred, in which one might say and feel, too, John Norton, that he saw the sunrise of a soul warm and pure as the morning. But why attempt description? The years vanish as I speak, and I see her as she was, on the evening she died."

He paused a moment. His face was white. The muscles at the corner of his mouth twitched, and he clutched the arms of the chair in which he was sitting with his hands. He was evidently contending with whatever strength he had against the emotion which rolled in waves of feeling over him, as lifted and moved onward by the impulsive memories of the past. In a few moments

he continued, with his hands still clutched on the arm of the chair: —

“It was evening — the evening on which she and I were to be married; the evening on which we were to be married, John Norton, do you understand?” and he looked at the Trapper with eyes already moistened for tears.

“I understand ye,” said the Trapper; and he bowed his head unconsciously to his guest, but with a motion of profoundest sympathy.

“We were to be married,” repeated the man. “The priest had come; the friends were present, — the father on my right, the mother at the left, the minister in front. The opening words had already been said, when I felt a shiver run through her frame. Startled, I turned. She gasped; she flung her hands on high; she gave one piercing scream, and down at the altar’s front my bride fell dead!”

“Good God!” said the Trapper.

For a full minute not a word was said. The Trapper, with startled look and pitying eyes, gazed fixedly at his guest. The man gazed as fixedly into the face of the Trapper.

“What happened then?” said the Trapper, when the silence had become oppressive.

“ I lifted her in my arms,” said the man ; “ I bore her to her chamber,— the chamber that was to have been ours, John Norton,— laid the dead and beautiful body on the bed, drove the friends and parents from the room, locked the door, and watched the night out with my bride. Oh, the talk that we two had that night, John Norton ! The pledges we gave and the vows that we exchanged none but the God of the quick and the dead ever knew.”

“ I sartinly ax yer forgiveness,” said the Trapper, “ ef my words hurt yer feelin’s ; but I can’t conceit, although ye who mean to be truthful, I don’t doubt, tell it to me face to face, that the dead ever talk to the livin’.”

“ John Norton ! ” exclaimed the man, and he flung his hands on high with imperative gesture, “ I swear by the heavens above, where her spirit has its home, that my bride talked to me that night ! And she pledged me a solemn pledge, that once each year, while I stayed on the earth, if I kept my pledge to her, that she would come, if permitted of God, and make her presence known by signs and movements that I could not mistake. And the vow that she made me in death she has kept hitherto, and

will keep here and now; for this is the night and " —

He would have said more, but the hounds on the hearth moved uneasily, woke from their sleep, sat suddenly up on their haunches, and with inquisitive muzzles scented the air, while Lucky, the dog, moved with some strange feeling of love or fear, crept half up into his master's lap. Either the movements of the hounds, or some cause to the Trapper undiscoverable, had checked the man in his sentence, which he finished in a voice scarcely above a whisper:—

" This is the hour ! "

With the words the man rose suddenly from his chair and stood erect in the attitude of listening.

" Have you ears, old man ? " ejaculated he. " Then listen, for the steps of my bride are coming to your door ! "

What he would have said further cannot be known; for the two hounds that had continued uneasy lifted their muzzles into the air and gave in concert a low, mournful, and prolonged cry, while Lucky sank suddenly to the floor, his bright eyes moving from his master's face to the door, and back from the door to his master's face.

Nor was the Old Trapper unmoved. Like all whose lives have been lived in the woods, the superstitious element was strongly developed in him. A child of Nature, as he was, the marvelous and the mystical found in him, if not a believer, by no means an unsympathetic listener. The unnatural motions of the hounds, whose singular conduct the Trapper had not been slow to notice; the impressive manner of his guest, and that stronger but more subtle and indescribable influence which one person, when powerfully moved, can exert upon another, conspired to produce upon him an effect which in other circumstances would have been impossible. Be this as it may, he too had risen from his chair with his guest, and thus, amid the profoundest silence, the two men stood in the attitude of listening.

Was it the wind? Was it more than wind? Certainly something moved in the air outside and overhead of the cabin,—moved as wind might move, and yet it was more of a motion than a sound,—a motion that seemed to come on and come down as from a height,—come down and alight. And then—what was that? Was it a footstep in the snow? A fox, perhaps,

brushing swiftly by through the drifts. A rabbit bounding lightly round the corner of the cabin. And yet the motion that made the sound, if sound there was, was slower than the quick step of a fox, and heavier than the light motion of a hare.

“*Hark!*” said the man; and he said it in a whisper, while his face flamed; “*she is coming!*”

Was it imagination? Was it fancy? Was it a trick played on the reason by excited nerves? Was it reality? Something was coming. What? For up the path made in the snow toward the hunter’s cabin came a step,—a light step, and yet a step that seemed to hurry as if running on swiftest errand, as if fulfilling some mission of need: came swiftly on,—came to the threshold of the cabin door, and—stopped. For an instant, silence, and then a knock sounded plainly and distinctly on the panels.

Whether the words came from him as the direct result of the tension which he was under, or whether they were the result of habit, and spoken involuntarily, it would be vain to inquire, but no sooner had the rap sounded on the door than the Old Trapper lifted his head, and facing the entrance, said:—

“ Come in ! ”

For a moment a hand fumbled with the latch, and then the door suddenly opened, and in the open doorway, plain to sight, stood a woman !

The man flung his arms into the air, gave a moan, and fell, as if dead, to the floor.

CHAPTER V.

YES, a woman, there was no doubt of that. No spirit ever had such face, and eyes, and mortal form. A face of earthly beauty, and a form whose perfect poise, and active, buoyant life spoke not of spiritual but of perfect mortal mould. A young woman, from whose face looked forth profound astonishment at the spectacle she beheld: the man lying on the floor; the dog, Lucky, scratching at his breast; the Trapper with every feature of his face suggestive of surprise.

“What have I done?” said the girl. “Is he dead?” and she looked at the man lying on the floor where he had fallen, and the dog, Lucky, who was tugging at his garments with piteous cries, as if to him his master was asleep, and he would wake him.

“Dead! no,” said the Trapper; “ye see, he isn’t very strong, and a leetle onsteady in his head, as I conceit; and yer comin’ in suddenly on him, when he was expectin’ somebody else, took him all back; but he’ll come to in a minit

ef ye'll fetch me the dipper of water there;" and the Trapper moved to the side of the man who had swooned, knelt beside him, loosened his necktie, and began to chafe his wrists.

The girl quick as flash slipped her hands from her mittens, threw off her jacket, and casting aside her hood glided to the pail that stood at one end of the hearthstone, and stooping over the prostrate man began to sprinkle the water with skillful fingers on his face.

As she had thrown aside her hood and jacket, her hair had escaped its fastenings. It was bright auburn in color, and abundant, and fell with many a wave and curl even to her waist.

"Whom was he expecting?" asked the girl, as placing the dipper on the floor she seized the other wrist, and began to chafe it with her own soft and glowing palms.

"It's hard to say, young woman. Yis, it's sartinly hard to say who the man was expectin', or who the old fool called John Norton was raaly lookin' fur when ye opened the door. Ye see, the man has had his ups and downs, and the downs have had the best of it fur the most part; and he was tellin' me the story of his life, and he'd got to an interestin' p'int, fur he was tellin'

me that the girl he loved died on his weddin' night, and the night was Christmas Eve, and that her sperit always appeared to him on the same night each year, and at a certain minit, too, and that the minit had come. And as he told the story with a good deal of 'arnestness, it had sorter took hold of me. And when he jumped up and said she was comin', ye see I riz too; and by the Lord of marcy, young woman, when I heerd yer light steps travelin' up the path and heerd ye stop at the door,—well, ye see, here was the man that said the sperit was comin', and there was yer steps, and the pups actin' onnateral, and I eenamost thought the sperit had come. And when I jest told ye to come in, I sartinly expected that an angel would take me at my word; and I conceit they did," said the old man, as he looked into the face of the girl, whose eyes, as her hands continued to chafe the man's wrist, were looking into the old man's face with an expression half of wonder and half of amusement in them. "Yis, I conceit they did," and his eyes twinkled and his face beamed with humorous good-nature; "but in a body a leetle too solid fur wings to lift, onless they make 'em of onnateral size in etarnity."

“See,” said the girl, “he is coming to himself.”

“I shouldn’t wonder — shouldn’t wonder,” said the Trapper. “A faintin’ fit is nothin’ to be consarned over, ef the shirt band isn’t too tight, water handy, and them who be tending to the case don’t make too much fuss about it. All ye have to do is to let him lay flat on his back, flirt some water in his face off and on, rub the wrists a leetle, and keep up a kind of cheerful conversation. That’s jedicious treatment, as I’ve noted. There is sech a thing as overdoin’ in sech matters,” said the Trapper philosophically, “and a man has got to have a good deal of sense to let natur’ alone; fur natur’ is natur’ and ye can’t hurry her out of her gait, whether the trouble be in the stomach or the head. But if ye’ll not hurry her so as to make her overrun the track, she’ll work the scent up in time, and be as sartin of herself as a hound runnin’ with a high nose when the buck is in full sight.”

At this point the man gave a sudden gasp, and a kind of convulsion shook his frame; at which the dog Lucky gave a short, quick, joyous bark, and a frisk of genuine happiness.

“He is comin’ to,” said the Trapper, speaking hurriedly and in a low voice; “ye do well to

note the dog," — for the girl had turned her large eyes toward him at his manifestation of happiness, which the Trapper was not slow to observe, — "ye do well to note the dog; fur though he came from a most onreasonable cross, the dog be a good un. He be comin' to himself," whispered the Trapper, "and, young woman, don't ye be skeered ef he acts a leetle flighty; fur though he be an honest man, and his knowledge be somethin' wonderful, still, he has his notions. Yis, he has his notions; so don't ye be consarned, ef he acts a leetle flighty."

The caution certainly did not come too soon; for after another gasp had heaved his chest, and another shiver ran through his frame, The Man Who Missed It opened his eyes; and as he opened them his gaze fell directly upon the girl. A more rapid or changeful play of features was never seen upon human countenance. It was true he had awakened from his trance. But reason, that sure guide to correct vision, though struggling back from the depth to which she had been thrown, had not yet fully regained ascendancy. Had there been an angel indeed before him, the awe of his look could not have been more profound than it was as it rested on the face of the

girl. Her hair unbound, in waves of gold flowed over her shoulders, covering them almost from sight; her large expressive eyes were fastened on him, animated to a degree because of the curiosity, the expectation, and the sympathy which possessed their depths.

The man's face was yet white with the pallor of his swoon. He gazed steadfastly a moment at her, who had seemed to his expectant and indiscriminating vision the bright being he had loved and lost long years ago. And then he timidly stretched one hand out toward her own, and after an instant's hesitation, as if to summon courage, he gently touched the warm palm with the tip of his finger. Still he acted like one undecided. He struggled up to a sitting posture; passed his thin hand with steady pressure over his temples once or twice; pinched his forehead with his fingers, as if by some physical effort he would recall his wandering faculties; and then as his hand fell to his lap he fixed his eyes again upon the girl, and gazed steadily at her face.

The Trapper's eye was on him, and he noted that, as he gazed, the look of awe died out, and into its place came a look of pain, tempered with gentle sadness.

“Thou art like her,” said he at length. “Thy beauty is perhaps as great as hers; but thou art not she. Thou hast come in her place. She was true in coming; she has been true in sending thee; she has kept her promise, Old Trapper, and given me the sign.”

“What sign did she gin ye, friend?” said the Trapper.

“She said she would come each time, save one, and then she would send another, as pure as she, but happier; and that one should come a year, lacking an hour, before she would come. And when she came at the end of the year, lacking an hour, she would come for me, and we should find our second wedding at an altar where death could not part us. Young woman, thou hast come in her place,—the pledge is kept, and I read the sign. Old Trapper, one year lacking an hour, and then ‘The Man Who has Missed It’ will be done with missing.”

“We shall die at the Lord’s appi’ntment, friend,” said the Trapper sturdily. “We shall come to the edge of the Great Clearin’ when the last step of the trail has been trodden, and not before, sign or no sign. For no man may shorten the number of his steps, and no man

lessen the number of hours, and no man may set twelve month aforehand the hour of his death, or the manner of his goin', whether he die in peace in his bed, or be struck down in the scrimmage. Come, friend," said the Trapper, laying hold of him gently, but firmly, "let me help ye up, and do ye get into yer chair; fur ye be weak as a kitten, and I have other work to do, or the Lord has made a mistake in sendin' this young woman here. And now, young woman," he resumed, when he had assisted the man to his chair, "whence came ye? And what evil has befallen ye that ye came runnin' to my door, on a winter's night, when I conceived there wasn't a livin' creetur of my kind within fifty mile of my cabin, and sartinly none like ye, who be from the settlements, as I plainly see, and"—

The Trapper turned absolutely white. For an instant his lips moved, as if struggling for speech, but not a sound issued. At last, while the pallor of an awful fear spread over his face, he cried:—

"God of marcy, young woman! have ye come from Henry?"

"I don't know whom you call Henry," said the girl, evidently astonished at the dreadful

looks of the Trapper's face,—the awful fear and pallor of it as much as at the intensity of his exclamation.

It was a spectacle, indeed, to see the change that came to the Trapper's countenance. The whiteness of a terrible dread vanished, and his cheek took its natural hue. The tightness of his look relaxed, and his fingers, that had been nervously clutched, unclosed from the palm.

“God be praised!” said the Trapper, speaking as a man speaks when his feelings are too tense for silence. “God be praised fur yer ignorance. I thought, mayhaps, the boy was gone, and that my eyes would see his face no more. The grave under the pine is enough. When another of the three be made, may his eyes see it, not mine. But why did ye come?” continued the Trapper, “and what be yer wants?”

“My name is Magnet,” said the young woman, “and I came for help. And I want you to be quick; for, though I do not think he is suffering from cold, and though he told me not to hurry, for he was in no pain, yet I know he must be in pain; for” —

“Who is in pain?” said the Trapper. “Speak

quick, young woman, and put on yer things, fur ef a man be in pain, and he is waitin' fur us, the sooner we git to him the better."

"It is my brother," answered the girl, slipping into her warm, fur-lined jacket, and tying her hood closely under her chin, while the Old Trapper shoved his feet into his moccasins, and reached for the foxskin cap over the doorway. "It's my brother," she repeated, "who is sickly, and has come into the woods because his physician had given him up, and said he must die; and my brother said he wouldn't die, and I said so, too. And the physician said perhaps he wouldn't if he could get into the woods. And so we started for your cabin, for we had heard of you, John Norton. My brother knows the man whose brother you saved in the rapids last year, and he told us to come straight to your cabin, and you would care for us. And so we left our city home, as I said, and started for this spot. A countryman brought us in from the edge of the woods till we struck the borders of the lake, just after the sun had set; and he wouldn't go another step, for he said the ice was uncertain, and he didn't know the breathing-holes. And he proposed to camp till morning

and then come on; but my brother was impatient to be here, for you see he was excited in being so near to you, of whom he had read and heard so much. And he said he would walk if I would, and so we took the direction from the teamster, who said we would see the light of your cabin after we had passed the second island; and sure enough we did. And we got on famously, and were almost here, when my brother slipped and fell, and sprained his ankle so he could not walk. But I could see the light shining bright through your little window; and I hurried on, and came running to your door, and — you know the rest.”

It had all been told in far less time than it takes to write it; for the girl spoke hurriedly in her excitement, and did not waste a word.

“Ye be a brave girl, Magnet,” said the Trapper, “and ye have acted with jedgment. Stay where ye be, friend,” said he, speaking to The Man Who had Missed It, “onless ye feel like h’istin’ two or three more logs on to the fire. And say,” continued the Trapper, with his hand on the latch, “put over the kittle and git the water bilin’. The boy will need a warmin’ drink when he comes. No, no, Magnet, ye mustn’t

walk, yer feet have been •far enough to-night. Git on to the sled.” And the old man pulled a sled from the corner of the building, against which it was standing, and threw a bearskin over it in such a way that it would answer for a cushion and a covering both. “Git on to the sled and tuck yerself in, and I’ll give ye a ride sech as ye can’t have in the settlements, ef yer horse hasn’t but two legs. No, no,” said the old man, laughing to himself as he started on, “ye needn’t tell me the direction, fur I’ve got the line of the trail, and it isn’t often that I follow so small a track, either.” And the old man, laughing to himself, started on a dog-trot up the lake; for the snow on the ice was light, and offered little impediment.

They had gone half a mile, perhaps, when the Trapper turned his face backward to the sled, and said:—

“Well, Magnet, be ye a good jedge of distance?”

“I think you have come half way,” said the girl in a clear, hopeful voice, “for it’s a little this side of the island where he slipped.”

“Good enough,” said the Trapper; “ye’ve got a jedgmatical eye fur sartin, and as it isn’t

likely to wake any neighbors, I'll send a sound down towards yer brother that'll let him know we ain't a thousand miles off."

And the Old Trapper came to a stop for a single step, and sent a call from his mouth into the frosty air, the echoes of which, passing on from bluff to bluff, must have gone nearly to the inlet.

The girl laughed pleasantly at the energy of the sound.

"S-h!" said the Trapper.

An answering halloa came across the surface of the snow. A brave and cheerful sound it was, full of gladsome courage, although by no means strong; as if the spirit rather than the mouth sent it forth.

"That is Tom," said the girl. "Dear old fellow! I'm afraid he thinks I have been gone a long time."

"He's a good un," said the Trapper, "ef a man can be judged by the sound of his voice; fur his call had hope in it, and a kind of cheerful sartinty that a coward couldn't send forth."

"Tom is no coward," said the girl. "He would have died long ago if he hadn't been determined not to. You don't think he will die up

here, do you, John Norton?" and the girl put the question plaintively.

"Die?" ejaculated the Trapper. "Sartinly not. No one can die up here, onless the number of his days be run out by reason of his years; or his sperit be crushed by reason of his troubles. Die? No. No man can die with an appetite; and yer brother will be eatin' like Henry himself afore he has been in the cabin a week."

"Who is Henry?" asked the girl.

"Henry be mine," said the Trapper. "I had two — Henry and the Lad. The Lad be gone, but Henry be left. Ye'll know him some day, perhaps."

"I didn't know that you had children," said the girl.

"Not arter the flesh, Magnet, not arter the flesh; but arter the sperit,—and Henry and the Lad be mine arter the sperit."

While the dialogue had been going on the Old Trapper had maintained his steady trot, and at a pace that ate up the distance of a mile rapidly.

"I see him!" said the Trapper in a moment. "He has crawled into the p'int of the

island, and is jest lightin' him a fire. Yer brother has his wits about him, that is sartin, and is actin' like ā man of sense. But we'll give him a better fire than he'd make out here ef he burnt the island over. Here we are," said the Trapper in a moment, as he swung up to the point of the island. "Here we are, young man! and the cabin is not far away."

"Tom, dear Tom!" said the girl, as she jumped from the sled; and running up to the man seated on the shore, she flung both her arms around his neck, and kissed him.

"Dear Tom, here is John Norton!"

"Never mind the greetin' now," said the old man. "The air be bitin'; and the cabin be warm."

And putting his arms out, he lifted the young man upon the sled and wrapped him up warmly in the skin, and without another word he seized hold of the tongue of the sled and started toward the cabin.

The girl, with many questions to her brother touching his feelings, and with many a cheering word touching the warm fire ahead and the hearty greeting she had received from the Trapper, tramped along beside him. Thus the three

—the Trapper, happy in the thought of the deed he was doing; the young man who was determined not to die; and the girl whose love was equal to his courage,—passed rapidly on over the snow, and came to the Trapper's cabin.

CHAPTER VI.

THE Trapper flung open the door, and, lifting the young man bodily from the sled as if he had been but a child, carried him into the cabin and placed him down in the great armchair that stood in front of the fire, while his sister removed his cap, overcoat, and wrappings, with a quickness and dexterity which only a woman brings to the performance of such homely ministries. It took but a few moments of time for the Trapper to examine the young man's ankle, which, when he had done, he proceeded to dress with its proper wrappings; for in his checkered and eventful life — on march, in battle, and in hospital — he had had no little training in practical surgery.

“Ye sartinly had a pritty sudden slip; and ye've got a pritty bad strain in the ankle here,” said the Old Trapper as he was preparing to wind the bandage on to the extended limb; “and a strain in the ankle is eenamost as bad as a crick in the back. And either of 'em is enough to larn a man his mortality, as I conceit. It's sar-

tinly strange how the givin'-out of some leetle j'int, or cord, or bone in a man's body, will kink him up as much as it does."

"The old hymn says," said the girl, speaking in a bright, cheerful tone,—

" 'Strange that a harp of a thousand strings
Should keep in tune so long.' "

"That's a goodly number of strings," said the Trapper, answering her bright look with a face that broadened and beamed in its good-nature; "that's a goodly number of strings, Magnet, fur an ordinary-sized instrerment to have. I was up in the fur country, nigh on to ten year ago, where the Injuns and half-breeds hunt fur the Company,—and I don't conceit that a meaner set of human bein's be on the 'arth; fur atween their thievin' and their drinkin' and their murderin' they keep an honest man pritty active. Ye see, I went up there to sorter see the country and have a good taste of trappin', as I used to know it; fur I'd heerd that fur was plenty in them parts, and the country not overcrowded. So I jest went up there, and, pickin' out a couple of good streams, I went to work in an honest sort of a way. I hadn't been there more than a week

afore a half-dozen of the half-breeds, with two or three Frenchers, dropped into my cabin one night to warn me off. They was a pritty noisy set of chaps, and arter a good deal of blusterin' they said they'd give me jest two days to git out of the country."

"Did you go, John Norton?" asked the girl, with her bright eyes fixed on the Old Trapper's animated countenance, as he continued to wind on the bandage.

"Not exactly in the two days, Magnet," said the Old Trapper, looking up with a gleam in his eye that chilled the humor of their expression; "I sorter argered with 'em fur a while. I told 'em that I'd come up to see the country and git acquainted with their way of doin' things and have a sorter breathin' spell; that I didn't mean to do anythin' wrong or make any inimies. Ef they had any streams they specially liked, seein' as how they was natives, I'd stand aside and take some poorer ones. Ye see, Magnet, I talked sorter easy to 'em, fur ef there was to be a fight, I wanted to be on the right side, and I conceit that a man who tries to git along without a fight is on the right side of it, ef he has to go into it arter all."

“I hope you didn’t have to fight, did you, John Norton?” asked the girl.

“It got pritty near it,” said the Trapper; “‘yis, it got pritty near it,” repeated he, as he held up the coarse needle that he was trying to thread between the fire and his eye, “for I barnt considerable powder off and on afore I got rid of the creeters. Ye see, they was sorter on-reasonable, and they wouldn’t listen to sense; and, arter I found they hadn’t any jedgment, I left off talkin’.”

“What did you do, John Norton,” said the young man, whose face showed that he was following the Trapper’s experience with intense interest, “after you left off talking?”

“Well, ye see,” answered the Trapper, “they was on-reasonable, and there wasn’t but one thing to do, — I sartinly think this needle hasn’t got an eye to it. I wish I could git a needle that a man could git a decent-sized string through in less than a half an hour’s punchin’, — there wasn’t but one thing to do,” continued the Trapper, having at last, by the sheerest luck, found the eye of the needle: “ye see, they got to talkin’ louder and louder, and then they went to sorter handlin’ their knives and edgin’ round

me, till I conceited the thing had gone about fur enough, and so I reached fur my rifle, loosened my knife a trifle, and spoke to the pups, who sartinly seemed to understand their lingo, fur their bristles was up and their teeth lookin' sassy. So I jest reached fur the rifle and spoke to the pups, and we eddicated them half-breeds fur about five minits, and gin 'em our idees of the matter."

"I shouldn't have thought," said the young man, "that you could have held your own against them all."

"There was considerable doubt who owned the cabin for a minit or two," answered the Trapper, "fur though there wasn't any of them very big sized, yit they belonged to a nimble breed; and a nimble fellow in a scrimmage is a man ye have to look out fur; but the pups was a good deal of help, fur they didn't like the smell of the creeturs from the fust, and they showed considerable 'arnestness; and I had got rather riled myself in the talkin', fur they was mighty sassy, I can tell ye. And so when I let loose on 'em, I did it with the feelin' of a man who has got wusted in the talkin', and had got to make it up in the doin'. Yis, it was a lively time fur

sartin," said the Trapper, laughing to himself, "fur though I didn't barn any powder, — fur ye see, Magnet, I didn't want to do any violence, I only wanted to sorter eddicate 'em a leetle and give 'em the main p'int of the case, as I understood the rights of the matter,— I did use the rifle stock a leetle loose, and, when that broke, I reasoned with 'em with a small bench there was in the cabin till the cabin got too small to hold anythin' more than the bench and the pups; fur a bench can fill up a good deal of room ef ye handle it a leetle loosely and ain't too particular what it hits."

"Did they let you alone after that?" asked the young man.

"No, they didn't," said the Trapper; "they pestered me all they could; but I stood my own fur nigh on to a month, and they hadn't been playin' their devilments on me more'n a week afore it got to be a good deal like the old-fashioned times; and the man that could send lead straightest and git to cover quickest had the best of it. I stood my own as long as I conceited it was safe, and then I gathered up my traps and took the back trail, fur the whole country was actu'lly swarmin'; and they follered me nigh on to fifty

mile, and we had a good deal of dodgin' and shootin' along the way. But I got 'out of it alive, and I brought back one whole skin anyway, and that's more than a dozen or more of 'em could say."

"I don't see why you should run such risks, John Norton," said the girl, "merely for the sake of a few skins."

"Resk!" answered the Trapper; "there wasn't any special resk, as I know on, fur there wasn't any of their tricks that I hadn't seen afore; and I could tell jest about what the sneakin' creeturs would do. Ef I had only had Henry with me, and the Lad, and the boy had liked the fun, we would have stayed, and trapped the season through, and we'd picked our streams, too. Fur with one good rifle in the cabin and two trusty pieces on the trail, there ain't half-breeds enough in the north country to drive 'em out ef they've made up their minds to stay. There," said he, as he finished sewing the bandage and stuck the needle into the lapel of his coat, "there, young man, ye needn't worry about yer ankle; the pain is about out of it now, and ye'll be usin' it, as well as the other in a day or two. And now," said he, rising to his

feet, "what shall I call ye, young man? And what can I do fur ye?"

"You are to call him Tom," said the girl, "and you are to call me Magnet. We've got other names, of course, by which we are known in the city; but we've come up here to be children — Tom to get well, and I to help him get well. So call him Tom and call me Magnet; won't that do?" and the girl looked brightly up into the Old Trapper's face.

"Sartinly, sartinly," said the Old Trapper, laughing; "one name is as good as another ef the man that owns it is contented with it. Ef ye want to be childun, ye shall be childun, and I'll call ye by the names ye have said."

"But you asked us what you could do for us, John Norton," she replied.

"Sartinly, Magnet; that's what I said," responded the Trapper.

"We want you to build a house for us," said the girl,—"a little log house just like this, right beside yours here somewhere, and we've brought everything in to furnish it. It's all down on the load with the teamster—bedding and chairs and provisions, and everything we need; and if you will only build us a house right here by yours,

and let us live with you till Tom gets well, I shall be the happiest girl in the world. Will you do it, John Norton?"

"Sartinly, Magnet, sartinly. I've built a great many housen, as ye call 'em, in my day, with nothin' but an axe; and I can throw ye up a cabin in a couple of days, and a snug un, too. Ye can live as comfortable in it as a squirrel in his hole."

"But we want to board with you, John Norton," continued the girl; "we want to come over to eat at your table and stay with you all the time when we are not asleep. May we do it?"

"Of course ye may," said the Trapper; "and ye shall have enough to eat, for venison is plenty and fat this winter."

The girl stooped and whispered to her brother for a moment, and then she looked up to the Trapper, and, hesitating, said:—

"How much will you let us pay you a week for our board, John Norton?"

"I don't understand ye," said the Trapper; and he looked from the face of the girl to the brother, and then from the brother's face to hers, and again he said, "I don't understand ye."

A fine color came into the girl's face. She looked at her brother and hesitated a moment as if studying for the best possible way to say what, woman-like, she was determined to say, and then, dashing at it with the charming frankness that became her so well, she burst out: —

“We are not poor, John Norton, we are rich. We have all the money we want, and more too, and we don't want to be beggars; we want to pay you for all your trouble; and we shall be a great trouble to you: so do tell us what we shall pay you.”

“Magnet,” said the Trapper, “I know leetle of what ye call money, and I need leetle; fur the wants of a man who lives accordin' to natur' are few and his needs be easily met. Ye and yer brother have come to my cabin, and ye are welcome to stay; and all that's mine ye are welcome to. And as fur yer money, I have no need of it, and so that is settled. And as ye have told me yer names, I will tell ye the names of them that be here. The dog on yer right, Magnet, is Sport; the one on yer left is Rover, and they be well bred. Ye'll find both companionable arter their kind. Ye'll find Rover a leetle slow and not given to play, fur the dog is

agin', and years makes man and dog alike grave and steady. And now that ye know the pups, I will introduce you to my friend. Childun," said the old man, turning toward his guest, who came forward from the corner of the room in which he had been silently sitting, "childun, this is a man who came in trouble to my door, and I made him welcome. He has had his griefs and his sorrers, and he calls himself 'The Man Who has Missed It,' and I don't gainsay his name; but I call him 'friend,' for that is the shorter name, and as atween him and me it answers the parpose of our companionship. The dog ye see by his side he calls, 'Lucky.' I don't conceit the reason of the name; but that doesn't matter. The dog is a knowin' dog, and Lucky is his name. And now that we know each other," said the Trapper, as if slightly relieved that the introduction was over, "now, friend and childun, sence we all know each other, we can all feel that we are at home," and so saying, the Old Trapper seated himself as did the others around the great fire that roared and crackled and flamed its flashes and spangles of light in vagrant gleams into the otherwise dark recesses and corners of the great room.

Thus the four were sitting on Christmas Eve in the cabin in the wilderness. In the cities chimes were being tuned in preparation for joyous Christmas morn. Parents were busy in those secret ministries of love which make happy the hearts of children. And children themselves were sleeping, dreaming happily of the morrow, save here and there a child, perhaps, that had no parent, had no love to make ready gifts, had no happy Christmas morrow, and into whose uneasy slumber would come that night no bright vision of gift and happy festival.

“Childun,” said the Trapper after a few moments of silence, “my friend here was tellin’ the story of his life afore ye come in, Magnet, and though I have knowed a good many folks that had their struggles, and I have had some disappointments myself off and on,—leetle setbacks sech as a man is likely to git in a scrimmage or a square stand-up fight, where a good deal of powder is barnt and the knife and the rifle stock is used careless like,—yit I never knowed a man in all my life that has had anywhere near as much uphill work, from the beginnin’, as my friend has, accordin’ to his tellin’. Fur ye see, childun, to start with, his mother and father was

lost at sea, when he was a leetle babe, and all on board the ship was lost with 'em; and he — leetle babe as he was — was the only bein' saved. I've read in the Scriptur' that the Lord notes the leetle sparrers, and sorter keeps an eye on the foxes, though I don't see exactly the necessity of that; fur a fox be a cunnin' creetur, and I never knowed an old mother-fox that couldn't take care of herself, and her kittens, too, ef there was an average run of rabbits, and partridge was ordinarily thick. Still, I don't doubt what the Scriptur' says, ye understand; and I suppose that the eyes of the Lord be sighted to see everythin'; and so He couldn't overlook, ef He wanted to, the foxes."

"I suppose," said Magnet, "that in the sentence you have quoted, the Saviour was comparing His poverty with the birds and the foxes, and meant to suggest that while the birds had their nests for a home and the foxes had their holes, He had no home on the earth."

The old man deliberated a moment as if the girl had suggested a new idea to him, and then continued: —

"It may be as ye say, Magnet. It sartinly looks sorter reasonable as ye think of it; but

there is difficulties in accountin' fur it onless the camps in His country was a good way apart, or the people onnaterally stingy, fur He couldn't have struck any region here in the woods and fetched a trail through fifty mile and not found a man to take Him in and gin Him a good welcome; and a cabin, ef the j'int's of the loggin' be well made and it is well placed as to wood and water, and the game is anyway plenty, isn't a bad place to live in, specially ef a man happens to be without a home. But it may be as ye say, Magnet, only they must have been a mighty mean set, take them as they run, when the Lord was on the 'arth."

"They were, John Norton," said the girl. "They were hard-hearted and cruel, and they hated Him because He was good, and He came to make them better."

"I heerd the missioners say that that was the real gist of the matter," answered the Trapper; "but they didn't put it as well as ye have, Magnet; fur they made a good many words about it, and sorfer mixed things up so that me and the pups had to do a good deal of councilin' arterwards to make out jest what they meant; but ef He hadn't any home," continued the

Trapper, looking toward his friend, "He wasn't any wuss off than my friend here, fur the only home he had was the poorhouse, and it wasn't a very comfortable spot either for a mortal to enjoy himself in, as he picturs it. And then the wust of it was, ye see, he didn't know his name, fur his mother and father was drowned when he was a leetle babe; and a man without any name is as bad off as a dog without any name,—nobody knows who he is, and he don't know who he is himself; and my friend here don't know who he was; and, as he says, he hadn't mother nor father, nor country nor home, nor friend nor name, and that's a count that brings a man to the last skin in the pack, as I conceit."

"But certainly," said the girl, casting a pitying look toward The Man Who had Missed It, who was gazing with a sober expression into the fire, but who, in answer to her look, lifted his eyes to her face as one who would take of the beauty and goodness of it as they who are hungry take food, "certainly, he found friends at last."

"Yis," said the Trapper, "he did, and good friends, too, that took him from the poorhouse and gave him a home with them."

“How many were there in the family?” asked the girl, and she looked not at the Trapper, but at The Man Who had Missed It.

“There were three,” answered the man; “the father, my benefactor,” — and he spoke the word with the falling inflection of reverence, — “his wife, and one child — a daughter.”

“Now,” said the Trapper, “ye’ve got nigh to the p’int we was at when yer comin’ broke us off, — leastwise, pritty near it. Ye see, my friend, who was a boy then, growed up with the girl, and, as was nateral, they growed to love each other. The weddin’ day was set, and they were actu’lly in front of the minister who was to marry ’em, and somethin’ happened.”

“What happened then?” asked the girl eagerly, and she and her brother both turned their faces quickly toward The Man Who had Missed It.

The Man Who had Missed It again lifted his face to the girl’s, and said in a calm, steady, but infinitely sad tone : —

“My bride fell dead at the altar.”

The faces of the two young people were a study to see. How full of finest ministry to the sorrow of this world is the expression which the

faces of the sympathetic can give us in our trouble! The girl rose quietly from her chair, moved to the side of The Man Who had Missed It, and lifting one of his hands held it for a moment in both her own, and then she laid it down on the arm of the chair, and quietly re-seated herself.

The dog, Lucky, came round in front of the girl, moved up to her side, and lifting his muzzle gently caressed her hand resting on the arm of her chair.

“The dog’s a knowin’ dog,” said the Trapper, nodding to the brother; “there isn’t much goin’ on in this cabin that he don’t see. I’m a leetle onsartin about the cross, but he’s got good breedin’ in him somewhere, ef it is a good deal mixed.”

“Now, friend,” said the Trapper, “ef ye feel like it, and the childun don’t feel sleepy, I would like to have ye take up the trail of yer story where Magnet’s comin’ crossed it, and carry it on a leetle, and I sartinly hope there didn’t anythin’ else happen of evil arter yer bride was taken away from ye; for ef there did, it sartinly looks as ef the Lord had overlooked ye in the app’ntments of His marcy with which He tem-

pers the lot of the weak and the onfortinit, and levels the ups and downs of life to some sort of a respectable average."

"John Norton," answered the man, "my bride had scarcely been buried before another calamity almost as great as her death befell me."

"Friend," said the Trapper, "ef I didn't know ye was a truthful man, I should sartinly doubt the story ye be tellin' me; fur of all the men I have ever seed that had woes on the 'arth, — and my eyes have seed human trouble enough to make me at times doubt ef the Lord is mindful of His creeturs,— I never seed a man that had gained so leetle and missed so much as yer-self. And now, friend, be careful of yer words, and make nothin' larger than it was; but tell me plainly what of evil happened to ye next."

The man looked into the face of the Trapper with clear and steady gaze, and then, as if he would pick the fewest possible words to describe the greatest possible grief, he said: —

"My benefactor died!"

CHAPTER VII.

FOR a moment no one spoke. The three looked at The Man Who had Missed It with eyes which expressed the sympathy of their hearts, but no word escaped them. Indeed, they knew not what to say. The death of his benefactor, following so swiftly as it did the death of his bride, put such a climax to precedent misfortunes, that the hearers felt themselves unable to express, in words, an adequate sense of his overwhelming loss. For a moment the silence continued, when The Man Who had Missed It interrupted it by resuming his narrative: —

“ Yes, my benefactor died ; — died as suddenly as his daughter had died before him. He was standing by my side in the laboratory, conducting with me a system of experiments. He was stating a proposition, and looking directly in my face, when a change, swift as a flash, came to his countenance. The very word he was speaking halted in his throat. He threw his hands into the air and dropped, without a moan or a struggle, dead at my feet. The double mis-

fortune literally broke the heart of the mother and the wife; and she, too, died that night, and we buried them both at the same time, one coffin on either side of my bride's coffin, — three coffins in one grave, John Norton. And when the mound was rounded over the three, I stood beside it, once more without a home and without a friend. All that I had won I had lost; all I had hoped for I had suddenly missed."

"No, you had not lost all," said the girl, and her face brightened, "you had not lost all; for you had your mind and your learning left. And all the wisdom and cunning that learning had brought to your natural abilities were with you. Were they not, John Norton?" and the girl flashed a glance into the old man's face.

"Sartinly, sartinly, Magnet!" responded the Trapper; "knowledge be a thing ye can't take from a man, nor a hound, onless ye kill him. And a man with larnin' can do eenamost anythin' ef he has the right sperit within him."

"I admit the force of what you say," said the man. "It is true that no calamity which leaves the reason untouched and the spirit unsubdued can rob man of the powers and pleasures of intelligence. And this thought it was

which strengthened me in my affliction. And when I left the neighborhood where I had spent so many happy years, I carried with me a great grief, indeed, but with it also a great hope. And I faced the uncertainties of the future with a spirit braced to overcome its obstacles, and to remove whatever impediment there might be in my path."

"Ye was wise in that," said the Trapper. "I've been in some tight places myself, off and on, in my life; but I was never in a place yit that I didn't git out of, and in pritty good shape, too, considerin' all the sarcumstances. I don't doubt but what ye got along pritty well, friend, arter ye got to work; and ef ye don't mind tellin' us, I would like to know what trail ye struck arter ye left the three graves."

"I have told you," said the man, "that I was by nature ingenious. I was born with the faculty of invention. With my benefactor I had been a student of Nature. With him I had discovered many of the forces which are in the earth and the air. I discovered the law which governs the movement of storms. I made myself acquainted with the scientists of the age. I showed them my data. I unfolded the principle. In my

enthusiasm I gave them all the facts which had been brought to my knowledge by years of patient investigation. I did it in the enthusiasm born of my success. I had no doubt of my reward."

"You got your reward?" said the girl interrogatively.

"I got no reward," said the man; "the men in whom I confided betrayed me. They were rich. They were titled. They were men known throughout the world. They examined my data. They took from me all the knowledge with which I was possessed. They mastered the principles that by years of patient investigation I had discovered, and then" —

"What did they do then?" said the girl.

"They published them as their own discoveries," said the man; "they stole my knowledge, and gave me no credit. They appropriated the honor that belonged to me. They never even gave me an honorable mention in their reports." He said this with a vibration of bitterness in his voice; with the emphasis of a man who feels that he has been greatly wronged, and yet with the sadness, too, of one who feels that the wrong will never be righted, and that the injury done him is irreparable.

“They were vagabonds,” said the Trapper; “yis, they were nateral thieves. They was no better than the half-breeds that steal the skins from another man’s trap, though his name be cut into the iron as plain as a file can do it. I trust ye ambushed them in their thievin’, friend, and squared accounts with ’em afore ye took up the line and left the country.”

“John Norton,” responded the man, “it is little that a poor man can do against a rich man; or that a lowly one can do against them that are in high places. It was a theft that I could not indict at the law. The property they stole from me was not that of money and lands, but of honor, of reputation, and of credit for having served the age and advanced it in intelligence and power. If I applied for membership to their society, they would not admit me. If I called at their studies, I could get no audience. I went to the editors of the great journals, and they looked upon me as crazy. I was poor, and they who had stolen my knowledge were rich. I was unknown, and they were honored. I was alone, and they were a part of a system. What could I do,—one against the many?”

“They had the best on ye, fur sartin,” said

the Trapper. "Yis, the sneaks had the best on ye; but I'd have warmed 'em in some way, ef I had been in yer place, afore I was done with the rogues."

"It was not a case, John Norton, in which physical force or human courage could win the fight. I had ascertained scientific facts of the utmost import. But they had been stolen from me by those whom the people honored, and why should the people believe a man without money, without title, without friends, when over against him are the honored and the great? But it makes little difference," said the man sadly. "I shall get my reward by and by, perhaps."

"Friend," said the Trapper, "the Scriptur' says that the Lord will app'int a day in which the vagabonds and them that have done evil on the 'arth will git a ginerall overhaulin'; and the idee is sartinly a reasonable one. Now, when that day comes, don't ye fail, friend, to be on hand, and do ye put in yer case as strongly as ye can when the matter of their cheatin' comes up. Ye'll find me somewhere in the crowd, fur I've got one or two things that will have to be attended to myself: not matters of any great weight, fur I have ginerally kept the account

pritty well squared as I went along; but there is a sneak of a half-breed up on the Canada line, nigh the head waters of the St. Regis, that's got two good pelts that belong to me, ef there is any ownership in trappin'; and his case will sartinly come up in the Jedgment, onless I can manage to git time to take a journey to the north eend of the woods once more. And ef I do, the Lord needn't pay any special attention to him, fur I know the p'int of the case, and I have a pritty good idee of sech matters. And ef I can git up to the Canada line, and the vagabond hasn't moved out of the country, I'll settle the matter in a jedicious manner. But I sartinly advise ye to be on hand at the Jedgment, and make them rogues give back what they stole from ye. And ef ye git into a leetle discussion over the matter, and ye want any help,—ye see, ye bein' one and they bein' several,—ef they should git noisy, ye might want a leetle help,"—and the old man moved his chair a trifle towards his guest in the simple earnestness of his confidential tender of assistance.

"I don't see," said the girl, "what good a scientific reputation will do one in heaven."

"Hoot!" said the Trapper; "Magnet, ye

don't understand these things. A man's reputation is his reputation, wherever he be, as I conceit; and it goes with him as the skin goes with the duck, whether he dives or flies. Friend, don't ye mind what the girl says, fur she be a girl; but ye jest stand up fur yer rights; and ef ye want any help, as I was sayin', any man to swear ye are right in yer charges, or to put in a few licks arter the vardict is given," —

"But, John Norton," said the girl, interrupting him, "you don't suppose that we are going to have bodies in heaven, do you?"

"Bodies! of course I do," said the Trapper. "Lord, Magnet! how is a man goin' to git along without a body? Why, we couldn't see each other ef we hadn't bodies."

"But, John Norton," said the girl, again in her earnestness interrupting him, "if we do have bodies, they won't be at all like these, but a great deal better."

"Better!" returned the Trapper; "there can't be a better body, Magnet, than this un. Why, I've lived nigh on to eighty year, and I never knowed a pain in my life, nor an ache, save sech as a man gits in a scrimmage or in battle, or sech as he has in his stomach when meat is

scarce and he is onnaterally hungry. Ye see, I know what I'm talkin' about, Magnet. A man who talks from an experience of eighty year isn't guessin' at the thing. No, no, the Lord can't make a better body than He gin me at birth; leastwise, I'll be perfectly contented ef He'll give me another as good as this has been, and keep it runnin' forever."

The man had listened, apparently, with a good deal of interest to the conversation, for the girl's animation and the Old Trapper's earnestness were amusing; but when the Trapper had closed with the sententious opinion touching the perfection of the mortal body, The Man Who had Missed It joined in the conversation, or, rather, continued his narrative: —

"I was a good deal cast down," he said, "for a time after I was cheated of the credit which belonged to me in the matter of which I was speaking; but though they could steal the results of past study, they could not steal the investigating quality of my mind. Knowledge remained with me, and out of the knowledge I had gained sprang other knowledge, and the line of my previous study led me to another and more important discovery."

“What was it?” said Tom, speaking for the first time, but who had listened as one greatly interested. “What was your next discovery?”

“I had discovered the laws which govern the movement of storms; I next discovered the *cause of storms itself*.”

“I beg you to explain it,” said the young man. “I have been something of a natural student myself, and the physical sciences have been my delight.”

“I am glad to meet you, sir,” said the man, speaking with animation. “I am glad to meet one who can enter sympathetically into the labors of my life, and who can appreciate, therefore, the losses I have met;” and the man turned his chair until he sat facing the young man, and addressed his explanation directly to him.

“I discovered, as I have told you, the movement of storms. I found that it was rotary, and that they moved with various degrees of rapidity. I knew that if I could command telegraphic communication, the approach of a storm might be known days before it would come; and the commerce of the country could be governed self-protectingly by the knowledge. And it took me years of patient examination before the

cause of storms was revealed to me; but at last I found it."

"What did you find it to be?" asked the young man.

"I will explain it to you," responded the man. "It is this: the origin of all storms is found in heat. Heat comes from the sun and the planets. When these sources of heat are brought in conjunction above any special area of the earth's surface, that area is subject to unusual heat; the atmosphere resting above that area becomes exceptionally rarefied and rises. This makes an atmospheric vacuum, and a rapid movement of air occurs,—the outward atmosphere rushing tumultuously in towards the center of the vacuum; — thus storms, tempests, and tornadoes are caused.

"Granted, therefore," continued the man, speaking with great rapidity and earnestness, "a certain planetary conjunction above a certain area of territory, at a certain time, and at that time within that area of territory, a storm, of greater or less violence according to the degree of the heat thus localized, is sure to occur. Do you follow my explanation?"

"I do," said the young man, speaking with

animation; "I follow it perfectly; and it is not only novel, but it is startling. If storms originate in heat, and the heat originates in planetary conjunction, and the planetary movements which result in the conjunction are astronomically known, why," and the young man hesitated a moment, while his eyes fairly shone with the intensity of thought which had flashed upon him, "why cannot storms be predicted as certainly as an eclipse?"

"They can be," said The Man Who Missed It. "I can predict *a storm a thousand years before it will come.*"

"Friends," said the Trapper, "suppose ye fetch up a minit at that p'int. Ye are pushin' the trail a leetle too fast to make all the blazes plain, leastwise, on both sides of the tree. And ef ye ain't keerful, ye'll git further into the swamp than ye'll find yer way out of without a good deal of hollerin'. Now, Magnet and me have been payin' pritty close attention to what ye have been sayin', and it may be that storms do go whirlin' round; fur I've seed the leetle wind-puffs spin themselves acrost the lake, and ye can't live in the woods a month in the fall and not see the winds play their whirligigs with

the leaves. And ef it's true with the leetle puffs, I conceit it may be true with the big uns. And it may be that storms do move in the way ye say,—though, arter my way of thinkin', they can't be relied on to move any way in particular, fur storms have their notions and be a good deal like a woman with too many idees in her head and a leetle over-arnest in her feelin's, — ye can't always tell which way ye'll find her.

“I ax yer pardin, Magnet,” said the Old Trapper, speaking to the girl, who had interrupted him with a clear peal of laughter. “I ax yer pardin, Magnet, ef what I've said about the onsartinty of wimmin's ways seem onkind to ye; but I've watched 'em a good deal off and on in my guidin' and in my trips to the settlements, and I've come to the opinion that wimmin be a good deal onsartin. Ye can't prophesy over night how they are goin' to feel next day. Not that I conceit that that's anythin' agin 'em, Magnet, fur the prittiest things in natur' be the things that change oftenest; and there's nothin' prittier than to see a woman change her mind over night, 'specially ef she was on the wrong side of the question when she went to bed. But,

friend, as to yer prophesyin' about the comin' of a storm a year or two afore it comes,"—

"I said a thousand years, John Norton. I can predict the coming of a storm a thousand years before it comes."

"A thousand year!" exclaimed the Trapper. "That's eenamost as long as etarnity. Yis, yis," said the Trapper, while an inexpressibly quizzical look came into his countenance, "I dare say ye can *prophesy* it; but I don't conceit the storm will come any more fur yer prophesyin'."

"Did you ever see an eclipse, John Norton?" asked the man.

"Sartin," responded the Trapper; "there was one year afore the last. Me and the boys was campin' on the Raquette that summer, and a big un it was, too. Fur the sun was blackened at noon-day, and the stars came out eight hours afore they orter; and the 'arth looked as ef it had gone to a funeral, and everythin' was dreadfully solemn. I didn't mind much about it, fur I'd seed the same thing afore, and I be a Christian man; and I knowed the Lord wouldn't wind things up in sech a sudden way; but there was a half-breed in the camp that conceited that the eend of the world had come; and as I

knowed he hadn't lived as he orter have lived, I didn't discourage the idee; but sorter helped it on a leetle with some jedicious talkin' that p'inted in that direction; fur I conceited that a good scare might make him a leetle more honest: and I suspected he'd handled one or two of my traps a leetle loosely the fall afore, and might do it agin ef he wasn't eddicated out of his thievin' notions. So I called the boys around me and whistled up the pups, who was a good deal skeered themselves, and jest told the boys that we'd better throw the powder into the lake, fur the fire would bust out pritty soon, and everythin' would be blazin'. And then I told the pups they'd better take to the water afore they got singed; — ye see, the boys took the hint of the thing, and Henry helped me out a good deal. Fur he said that there wasn't much use to move the horns or the pups, fur the flames wouldn't come leetle by leetle, but that the island would be blowed up a thousand feet into the air all at once; but that the good would be carried away by the angels. But ef a man had been a thief and had stolen anythin'; ef it wasn't anythin' more than an empty horn or a muskrat-skin, the angels wouldn't tech him with their

leetle finger; but he'd have to stay and take it, onless he owned up — and the boy put a good deal of 'arnestness into the words 'owned up'; " and the old man, thoroughly tickled at the memory of the ruse that they had played on the half-breed, stopped in his narration and laughed with a heartiness that watered his eyes. It was one of those exhibitions of laughter that is contagious; and even The Man Who Missed It, moved by the hilarity of it, joined with the two younger people in the explosions that followed.

"What effect did it have on the half-breed?" asked the girl, when the laughter had partially subsided.

"Well, ye see," said the Trapper, wiping his eyes with the sleeve of his coat, "the vagabond was ignorant and wicked both; and he sartinly thought the Jedgment had come, and he owned up to a string of pilferin' a good deal wuss than I had suspected him of; fur to start with he had taken six minkskins from me. I axed him ef he hadn't forgot one or two, but he swore that the six was every blessed one he'd taken.

"Then he'd pilfered a sack of salt from a trapper on Deadwood and a box of sugar from a party on Little Wolf; but I told him I didn't think the

Lord would make any special count of the sugar, onless it was better than most of the peddlers brought in from the settlements. But Henry said it was jest as bad to steal sand as it was to steal sugar; and as it helped the man towards righteousness, I didn't gainsay it at the time, but I argered the p'int with Henry arterwards; and I made him own up that it wasn't reasonable to hold even a vagabond to quite so close a reckonin' fur sand as it was fur real, fust-class sugar."

"What effect did it have on him the next day?" asked The Man Who Missed It.

"Jest about as much effect," answered the Trapper, "as your prophesyin' a storm a thousand year ahead would have on the storm, as I conceit; fur natur' has her ways, and ye can't prophesy her into doin' as ye want her to. And ye can't frighten a half-breed into honesty, fur, arter the darkness had gone, the vagabond was as chipper and chirp as I'd ever seed him; and I lost more skins the next fall on the line that led past his clearin' than I had ever lost afore on any one line in my life. For though a scare will make a thief shake fur a minit, yit it can't make an honest man of him; and when the fright is over, ef he was a thief at the start, he will be a thief still."

CHAPTER VIII.

NO one disputed the Trapper's conclusion; and after a moment of respectful waiting, as if to make sure that the Trapper had completed his remarks, The Man Who Missed It again resumed his narration. But the animation with which he had told his discovery had faded away. The light had left his eyes, and a sober expression possessed them. The play of features had departed, and his countenance had settled into sadness. His face, as revealed by the firelight, was one to command the respect of the gazer; for it suggested the refinement of thought and of scholarly habits; and at the same time it appealed to one's sense of pity, because over it disappointment, like a cloud, had thrown its somber shadow.

The three who sat gazing at him felt that in him they beheld a person who had been the sport of a fickle and cruel fortune,—felt that his lot was inscrutable; and that in the wreck of his body and in the permanent hopelessness in which his spirit was plunged, and perhaps in

which it rested, they saw the most pitiable of failures—a failure for which the man himself was not responsible; for by no fault of his did it come, and by no virtue of his, however exerted, could he have been delivered from it.

“It is needless for me,” said the man at length, “to narrate the countless disappointments of my life. It is needless for me to say how many things I have attempted, or how many things I have achieved, so far as mortal power could achieve them, or how many times a power stronger than my own—a power outside of myself, the power of wicked men, the power of circumstance, and the power of society, which I strove to serve, but which seemed banded against me—has dashed the cup of success, when brimming full, from my lips. My discoveries have been appropriated by others. And I who was upheld through the long nights of study and the long days of effort, in which I robbed my body of food that I might have the means to buy the little materials for my experiments, by the hope that I might link my name with scholarly achievements and be remembered among the honored when I was gone, have lived to see the results of my toil and sacrifice appro-

priated by those who robbed me, and the honors which should have been mine given to other men.

“ I have not only discovered laws and principles and forces of nature that were unknown, but I have made inventions of the greatest value to mankind, by which they have been better clothed and fed and ministered unto in that which makes life happy,—inventions that have been stolen from me by corporations that have built fortunes on the patents they secured from the results of my ingenuity; patents which should be in my name and not theirs, and whose income would have made me rank among the richest of the land. And here I am, after thirty years of ceaseless effort, and fifty of life, broken in body, weakened in mind, hopeless in spirit, without friends, and without a home,— a beggar on your bounty, John Norton, with no companion in life, and no one to mourn me when I die but this dog.” And the man looked into the face of the Trapper and placed his hand on Lucky’s head, who stood with his fore feet on his master’s knee, looking with his bright eyes into his countenance.

“ Ye shouldn’t feel in that way, friend,” said the Trapper. “ It is true we haven’t consorted

long together; but we understand each other pritty well, as I conceit; and though ye have some notions about storms and a few sech things that we can't exactly agree on, yit the trail we be both followin' lies in the same direction, and though I can't offer ye a home sech as they might in the settlements, yit the cabin is a good un, and while the j'int's of the loggin' hold together, and the shingles shed water overhead, ye be welcome to stay. And the Lord of marcy will sartinly see to it, friend, that we suffer fur no comfort, and that we come to the edge of the Great Clearin' in peace."

"You are a noble man, John Norton," answered his guest, "and I know that the welcome which you have given the homeless is sincere. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your kindness. Had the men with whom I have dealt possessed your spirit, I should not have been where I am or as I am; but what is ahead I know not. I feel that the trail, as you call it, is not a long one for me; and that should I accept your hospitality, my presence would not burden it long. I came into the wilderness to die, and out of the wilderness I shall not go. For of cities and men I have seen enough."

“Ye’re right there, friend,” said the Trapper; “the settlements be sartinly no place for a sensible man to live. I’ve often argued the p’int with Henry, and I raaly believe the boy in his heart agreed with me, though he would never confess it. He says the wilderness is the place to rest and the settlements the place to work. And he says a great many things about the good that a man can do in the settlements, and the happiness he can have; but the boy is young yit, and ye can’t expect the young to be wise like their elders; and I feel sartin that he’ll git round to my way of thinkin’ afore he gits to be of my age. He has a nateral taste fur the woods, and few be the signs in the ’arth or the sky that the boy doesn’t see; and ef ye have an eye to see the beauties of Natur’, and an ear to hear her speech, and a heart to larn her lessons, ye can’t find any happiness like the happiness which she will give ye, especially ef yer life be honest.”

The Man Who had Missed It listened with the deference that was habitual to him, to the utterance of the Trapper. There was a look in his eyes as he gazed into the old man’s face, noble and peaceful in its expression as it was, as if he longed to believe what he was hearing, in

the hope that to his stormy life something of the peace and the happiness of which the Old Trapper spoke might come.

“It may be as you say, John Norton,” he answered at length; “it may be that if when I left the three graves, I had come to the wilderness and made my companionship with Nature, educated my eye to apprehend her beauties, my ear to hear the wisdom of her speech, and opened my heart — bereaved as it was — to the consolation of her sweet peace, my life would have been happier. As I have looked at you and seen in yourself the result of the influences of which you tell, I have felt that though I might have found less, as men call finding, yet I should have missed less. Perhaps I should have been as useful, and beyond doubt I should have been happier; for the happiness that waits on toil is found in its reward; and the peace which follows aspiration is found in its fulfillment. As for reward, I have none; and certain it is that I shall die with all of my plans unfulfilled. But in the life beyond it may be I shall come to whatever reward I am worthy, and in happier circumstances be able to work out the fulfillment of my plans.”

“You spoke,” said Tom, suddenly joining the

conversation, "of being cheated out of patents that belonged to you. I do not see how they could have cheated you of the fruits of your inventions if you had been on the lookout and ordinarily shrewd."

"I do not think that I am ordinarily shrewd," said The Man Who Missed It, "at least, in protecting myself from the schemes of cunning men. I have studied principles rather than men, and the application of principles. And when I had ascertained a new principle and given it practical application in some invention; I was so happy in the thought of what I had done — the triumph I had achieved, the good it would do in the world — that I explained it to any one that would hear me; and whatever rich man told me he would help me introduce it to the public, I trusted the whole matter to him, not doubting he would deal honestly with me. I see now my foolishness," continued he, "but I am not sure I should do differently if the same things were to be done over again; for man's conduct is the result of his character; and I was born with gifts few have, and with deficiencies too, I rejoice in feeling, that few have also."

"The Bible says," said Magnet, "that 'ex-

cept ye become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven'; and I think the childish confidence and simple, honest trust that you have had in people, although they have betrayed it, is to your honor and not to your shame. And if through his trustfulness they have stolen from him his earthly riches, may it not be, John Norton, that our friend here has gained more than he has lost by the manner in which he has lived?" and the girl made her appeal to the Old Trapper with a face that absolutely shone with the hopeful purity of her thought.

The Old Trapper looked into her beautiful face for a moment with an expression on his countenance as if he wished he might agree with her, but was forbidden so to do by the shrewd native sense which was a part of his very constitution.

"It's pleasant to hear ye talk, Magnet," he responded in a moment, "fur yer voice be sweet and yer heart pure, but I don't conceit that yer idees be right. Now, I hold that the wilderness is pritty free from vagabonds, considerin' the number of folks that come in from the settlements every year; but it won't do fur a man to leave his traps outside the cabin in plain sight, or piled up on the banks of a stream, on-

less he keeps within range and doesn't mind the cost of a charge of powder now and then. I don't mean to say, Magnet, that I would actu'ly shoot a man fur stealin' a trap, leastwise ef it was his fust theft and the trap was an old un; but a leetle powder jediciously barnt, and a leetle lead sent nigh enough to start a button and ease the waistcoat a leetle, or sort of tickle the flesh, I have found calkerlated to help a man in his rights and give the vagabonds a healthy idee of law. Now, here's yer brother that has studied law and knows all its ins and outs, and the sarvices it was meant to do, as well as I know the ins and outs of the woods, and the sarvice that a hound owes to his master. And now I put it to yer brother, ef it wouldn't have been a good deal better ef our friend here had been more sarcumspect in his dealin', and amid other diskiveries diskivered what was his rights; and stood up fur 'em through thick and thin, and tickled the scamps a leetle with his lead when they was sneakin' round his cabin, pilferin' his traps and rummagin' a leetle loosely among his pots and his kittles."

"I think so, decidedly," said the young man.
"I think the law is made to protect the inno-

cent and the trusting; those that are naturally weak, or too modest and mild to defend themselves without the law's intervention. I think our friend here should have appealed to the law; and if he had, he would have found that the law was his friend, and that it would have protected him from the dishonest and the unjust."

"It takes money to go to law," said the man, "and those who cheated me were rich and I was poor."

"That's it, boy," said the Trapper, "that's it. Our friend has hit the nail square on the head and drove it clean through, and it don't take half an eye to see the hole either. It takes money to go to law. A trapper I met last year down on Grass River told me he went to law two year afore; and a lively time he had of it fur sartin."

"What was the case?" said Tom.

"Why, ye see," answered the Trapper, "he'd been troubled two year by a sneakin' thief on one of the lines he had run out, and he kept losin' skins; and finally he ketched him stealin' a mink; ketched him in the very act, and he went down to the settlements and complained of him. Well, the sheriff he got the feller finally, arter a month's huntin', and then the trial was

put off another month. Ye see, the jedge didn't know anythin', and the thief had hired a smart lawyer who could twist the jedge right round his leetle finger."

"What was the result of the trial?" asked Tom.

"That's jest it," said the Trapper; "there wasn't any result, as ye call it. The man told me the thing was put off and put off and put off. Ye see, he had to go sixty odd mile every time the trial come on, and every time it come on he had somethin' to pay; and the man swore,—and he looked like an honest man—that it cost him the arnin's of a year's trappin' afore he got through with it, and that arter all his fuss he never got any vardict anyway. The thing sorter fell through, nigh as I could git at it, and no one could tell exactly how. And when the man asked my idees about it, I told him I thought the thing might have been managed a good deal better than he managed it; that I'd had several sech cases myself; but had never had any actu'l trouble in managin' 'em, fur I never saw a thief I couldn't ambush by the second week of his pilferin', and ef ye once git yer eye on a vagabond when he's actu'ly handlin' the skins, and ye be

within range, and yer sights be right, why," and the old man straightened himself up, took up a stick and began to poke the fire, "ye never have any special difficulty arter that."

"But," said Tom, laughing, "that may be a very efficacious way to deal with thieves up here in the woods; but it won't do down among us in the cities. Our friend couldn't have protected himself and his property as you could yourself and your property; for the ways of the woods, as you say, are different from the ways of the settlements. But he could have appealed to the law."

"But I had no money," said the man.

"It don't matter," replied Tom. "It don't matter whether you had money or not. If you had a good case there was money in it, and any lawyer would have taken it up and pushed it through on a percentage; and many a lawyer, too, would have done it without a percentage; for there are noble men in the profession who will not stand by and see a poor man robbed of the results of his industry or his genius. I wish you had come to me with one of your cases, and, whether it was a thousand or a million that they had cheated you of, they should have paid you

every cent of it, and you should have had not merely the honor of the invention, but the money that it earned also."

The Man Who had Missed It listened to the young man with the eagerness of a child. It was evident that he had never thought it possible that he, a poor man, without friends, without knowledge of the law, and, we may add, without knowledge of men, could be protected in his rights. He had evidently pursued his studies and multiplied his inventions as impelled thereto by the irrepressible activity of the powers that were within him, and had yielded to his losses and his disappointments as to things that were inevitable.

For a moment he had certainly yielded himself to the impression produced by the earnest confidence of the speaker, for his eyes lighted, his face brightened, and the change which hope brings when it takes the place of despair flushed his countenance. But in an instant the light faded from his eye, the animation deserted his face, and, with his old despondency and, we might add, with his old weakness too, he turned his face from the young man, and, gazing at his dog, said :—

“ It is too late now. Even Lucky knows it's too late.”

It was evident that the dog did not accept the judgment of the master, for he spun himself round like a top, frisked, trotted in front of Tom and gave a sharp, clear bark, and then he took a swift circle round the cabin, and as he swept back to his master's chair jumped with such impetuosity between the Trapper's feet and the corner of the fireplace that he knocked over the huge iron tongs, which fell rattling noisily on the hearthstone.

“ Lord ! ” said the Trapper, laughing, “ did ye ever see sech a dog as that? I'd give the best skin I've got to know fur sartin his cross. I tell ye, friend, the dog be wiser than ye in his hopefulness. Ef ye can give the boy any p'int by which he can git a twist on the vagabonds, I'd sartinly give 'em. It may be ye'd git yer money yit; although what a man who's got a good cabin to live in, an honest companion, and a dog like that, wants of money, I sartinly don't see.”

“ I wish I had money,” said the man. “ God only knows how I wish I had money! I would like to know how it makes one feel to have once all the money he wants; money enough

so he could have a good house, and plenty to eat and drink without worrying where it would come from. Money to buy tools to work with, and chemica's to carry on experiments. Money to give to the poor and the homeless and those who don't know their parents and haven't friends, and no name save such as they picked up in the streets! Money to give away with your right hand and your left, not letting the one know what the other gave! Money to leave behind you that would keep on giving bread to the poor, and homes to the homeless, and education to all who crave it, when you yourself lie in the grave! None but God knows, Old Trapper, how much I have longed for money, that I might do these things. How often have I thought I had it, and how many times have I been cheated of it!"

There was something so earnest, so intense, so nobly self-forgetful in this outburst that the three who heard it were profoundly impressed.

"Give the boy the p'int! Give the boy the p'int!" exclaimed the Trapper, in tones as earnest as if he were demanding the signs of the trail when the smoke of battle was round him and there was not a moment to lose. "Yis,

give the boy the p'int, and see ef he don't git a clamp on them vagabonds that'll make 'em open their pusses as a fish does his mouth when ye have him by the gills. Lord! I'd eenamost go to the settlements myself ef the boy sent me word he'd got a good twist on 'em. How much do they owe ye, friend?"

"There is one corporation," answered the man, "that has stolen five of my patents. Three of them it has used for years; and on the strength of those three its whole business is builded. My royalty, had it been honestly paid, couldn't amount to much less than a million."

"Put it high enough," said the Trapper, "put it high enough. I ain't sartin that I actu'lly git the measurement of yer figgers, but my advice is that ef there's a least chance of gittin' it out of 'em, that ye put the figgers high enough. And ef ye throwed on a few more at the eend, sort of loose like, I don't conceit it would be anythin' more than the scamps deserve. So my advice is that ye put it high enough."

"I think I have," said the man; "it may be I have put it twice too high, but I know the corporation is worth millions, and its huge fortune is built up on the basis of my patents."

“What have you to base your claim upon?” asked Tom, speaking with a lawyer’s accurate coolness. “Have you any original papers — anything to prove that you have invented the things patented? or any memoranda of contracts touching the use of the same?”

“I have the *facsimile* of the original models,” answered the man, “duly stamped with the date and sworn to, and my own hand drew the specifications; and the original patterns and the specifications are doubtless in the Patent Office at Washington. I have memoranda of contracts in their own handwriting; but no formal contract, and no attested signature.”

“Of course,” said Tom, speaking with deliberate precision, “I cannot pronounce upon so intricate a matter on the moment; but I do not hesitate to say, sir, that if what you have said can be proved in court, you have a good cause of action, and a case can be brought against the corporation with a fair prospect of success. I will undertake your case, and I shall be greatly disappointed if you do not recover damages to the full extent of any claim that can be shown to a jury to be reasonable and just.”

“Do you think so?” said the man, and his

face flushed to the very temples; "do you think that I may yet live to have money to do the things I long to do? May I hope to yet live to enjoy the fruits of my labor, young man?"

"I know ye will!" said the Trapper, and he flourished the tongs he held in his hands in his earnestness. "Lord, friend, the scent is a hot un! The boy can run the race with a high nose, and ef he be made of the right stuff he'll drive the buck to water in an hour. What say ye, boy, can ye git the money?"

"I can't tell for certain," answered Tom, "as I have said; but I think our friend has a good case, if the facts be as he has explained; and if I was well I'd start for the city to-morrow, and I would bring the action at once."

"Easy, easy," said the Trapper; "we know where the game is, but ye mustn't start him till ye git the persition. Persition is everythin' in a hunt, and I dare say it's the same in law. As fur yer bein' well, ye can jest take that as settled. There's everythin' in feedin', and ye won't be here a week afore ye'll be eatin' like a Dutch parson. Ye needn't shake yer head, Magnet: I've seed a good many come into the woods thinner than yer brother and not half of his

sperit; and ef he isn't fatter by forty pound afore the ice breaks up in the rapids, I shall be mightily disapp'inted. I'll do the feedin' and the boy shall do the lawin', and atween us both, with the help of the Lord, ye shall have yer money, every cent of it; but I advise ye to put the figgers high enough."

CHAPTER IX.

WINTER had passed and spring had come. The warm South, like a fair enchantress, had sweetly forced her way into the rigid presence of the Ice-King, and persuaded him to move his throne to the far North, giving her possession of his present kingdom. This he had not done all at once, or without many an exhibition of bad temper. At first he swore by all his blasts that he would not move an inch, but would hold the earth and all the streams in biting bondage forever.

In his quick rage he even made a dash at her, and his icy breath blanched the roses in her cheek; and, frightened at his touch, she fled southward, until she flung herself, icy cold, into the warm Gulf Stream. From her fervid bath she rose, with all the color in her cheek and body glowing. Her beauty and courage returned with the warmth, and, more ardent than before, floating up to the North, again and again she practiced her sweet arts. At last her charms proved irresistible. The icy heart of Winter

melted, and, yielding to the gentle but persistent pressure of her warm palms, he gradually, halting ever and anon as if reluctant, moved northward, and finally left his late realm to her sweet sovereignty.

Never did a kingdom welcome the coming of a queen with greater alacrity. The pines shook off their covering of snow, and waved their branches in her honor. The lakes steamed with fog, under the cover of which the blue waves fought with the ice for liberty. They flung the crystal blocks against the rocky islands; slid the great cakes up the sandy beaches, and pushed the floating masses down toward the open mouth of the outlet which hungrily swallowed them.

The little streams swelled with importance, and rushed ambitiously downward, as if eager to join the battle waged amid the fog, between the lakes and the ice. The rivers chafed their bands asunder, and ran downward beneath the overhanging pines with rippling laughter.

The hills began to sing. First the partridge beat his roll-call. Then sounded the robin's flute. The hermit thrush surprised the air with its one note of miraculous purity; while, from the open waters of the lake, the loon, sarcastic

even in its gladness, poured forth its weird and mocking call.

One morn a little spotted fawn stole timidly out from the dark balsam shadows, and stood a moment with its small hoofs buried deep in the bright sand; looked its wonder for an instant from its clear eyes out upon the great stretch of water, and then stole back, frightened at the level distance perhaps. The next morning it came again; listened to the rippling song that rang its thin sound around the curved shore; boldly lapped the water with its tongue, and then frisked bravely in circles. Next morn a dozen of its kind chased each other in wildest happiness from end to end of the bright beach.

A few weeks and the arbutus flower came out sweet as modesty's own self. Then the cold, gray maples, the hard wiry-looking birches, and the leaden hued beeches, took to themselves a new expression. Their hard look softened; their rigid stiffness limbered to suavity; they seemed to thicken in the air. Their branches became more pendent; and one morning—a morning without a cloud—the sun came up flushed with determination; and to his ardor the trees yielded and welcomed him, with every bud

fully opened and every leaf wide spread. So winter passed, and spring came to the woods.

With the coming of spring the two young people, whose presence had incidentally found its way into this story, departed,—departed with a happiness at their hearts that only they know who have been delivered themselves, or have had their friends delivered, from the danger of death,—for Tom had entirely recovered his health, and returned to his city home and the duties of his profession, strong and robust. Their cabin, that the Old Trapper had built nigh his own, still stood with all the furniture in it; and often during the summer that followed and the succeeding fall the Old Trapper would go to the door, look into the familiar room, and say, “I hope the childun be both well,” and then, closing the door again, would go about his duties.

The young people departed; but the two old men remained. The Trapper, to whose stalwart frame the coming of years seemed to bring no weakness, but only a kind of seasoning, as it were, each leaving him a little thinner but otherwise apparently unchanged, continued to go about his duties with his habitual alacrity, and

to enjoy his pleasure with the same zest. Nature was a perpetual charm to him. His trained eye grew each year more skillful in its discriminating sight. His mind opened more widely with a growing apprehension of her loveliness. In a hundred ways she provoked his humor continually to mirth; and at the same time the years made sweet addition to his native reverence. So that he presented that rarest and most beautiful of pictures,—the picture of a man to whose gravity and whose laughter time makes equal addition.

But to his guest the passage of time seemed to multiply his burdens. He gradually weakened through the winter; and unless when talking with Tom in reference to the possible recovery of his property, he showed little interest in the conversation or the enjoyment going on around him. The young man had possessed himself of all the points of the case, and at his departure had left with his unfortunate client the assurance that he would recover from those who had cheated him at least a competence, perhaps a fortune. The Old Trapper with his usual hopeful spirit had predicted to the young people, at their going, that what the winter had done for

the young lawyer, the summer would do for his client.

“Ye needn’t worry about the man,” he had said to Tom; “ye needn’t worry about him at all. He’s sorter low sperited now, and his appetite isn’t fust rate; but he’ll chirk up when summer comes and go to eatin’; and a man with a good appetite can’t die onless by the Lord’s app’intment and somethin’ onnateral happens. No, ye needn’t worry about the man, fur I shall keep my eye on him; and ef ye can only warm them vagabonds that’s thieved his money from him, and git the word in afore the snow comes, the chances be that he’ll live twenty year yit; and twenty year is a good bit of time ef a man hasn’t anythin’ to do but enjoy it.”

But in spite of the old man’s hopefulness his companion did not gain in strength as time passed. Spring matured into summer. The long, warm August days came with their heat to the hills and the valleys, eliciting a hundred odors from the sods and the trees,— odors pungent with the flavors of health; but however fine their ministry, it seemed unable to revive either his drooping spirits or give strength to his weakened body. The Old Trapper strove to interest him

in his sports. He even made little excursions here and there by land and water, hoping that the gentle exercise would beget an appetite, and fresh scenes would bring back the departed animation to his spirits.

The Man Who Missed It accommodated himself with the utmost patience to the plans of the Trapper in his behalf, and evidently strove to show his host that he appreciated the kindness of his intentions. But the desired benefit which the Old Trapper longed for was not experienced. Day by day, his walk grew feebler on the carries, his steps shorter and more unsteady. In the boat his arms weakened more and more at the oar, until his stroke had so little of strength in it as to be inefficient. But the old man still persevered; and placing his guest in the stern of the boat, and taking the oars himself, continued to make little trips, hither and yon, for the entertainment of his companion.

“Ye see,” said the Trapper to himself, “it won’t do to let a low-sperited man stay in one spot; ye’ve got to keep him movin’, or he’ll git wuss and wuss; and ef a man keeps gittin’ wuss and wuss, somethin’ is sartin to happen; and I’m detarmined to keep the man alive till he

gits news from the boy; fur I feel sartin it'll be good news when it comes; and good news is the best physic in the world fur a man that's down sperited as he is."

And so the old man continued with a most touching perseverance his benevolent endeavors.

But in spite of all his efforts his guest did not improve. It was evident that the kindness of the Old Trapper touched him deeply, and that he was making every exertion in his power to show his appreciation. On only one theme could the Old Trapper make him converse with animation, and that was the prospect of Tom's success in the impending lawsuit.

"Do you think—do you really think, John Norton, that there is any hope?" said The Man Who Missed It one day, as the Old Trapper was rowing him round the lake shore.

"Think?" said the Trapper; "Lord! friend, I know the boy will git yer money! Ye see, he's got right on his side, and that's as good as an extra knife in a scrimmage. And the boy is smart; ye know he's smart, and that counts a good deal in a tussle, when things are sorter nip and tuck. I tell ye, friend, I'm mortally sartin that the boy has them vagabonds on the grid-

iron, and got them fairly simmerin' already. He'll bring ye in a barrel full of money afore the snow comes."

"I wish I could think so," said the man. "I could do a great deal of good if I had the money; but a man can't live beyond his time. You don't think, John Norton, that a man can live beyond his time, do you?"

"Well, that depends a good deal upon who fixes the time, friend," answered the Trapper. "I don't conceit that a vagabond can live beyond the time of the Lord's app'intment, especially ef he is actu'lly ketched in some open deviltry, and the man he's wronged has his finger on the trigger and the sights be right; but ef he be a good man, who hasn't any traps that hasn't his name on 'em, and no pelts in the cabin that he hasn't skinned, I conceit that the Lord gives him a good deal of leeway, and makes the time of his goin' a leetle off and on like; fur real honest men ain't plenty enough to be shet down on too sudden; and I conceit the Lord might alter His mind a leetle ef there was actu'l reason fur it."

And so the two men would converse, and in each successive conversation the hopelessness of

the one and the determined cheerfulness of the other stood in stronger and stronger contrast.

At last autumn came, and the man in very feebleness, unable to accompany the Trapper on his trips, remained in the cabin, having for his companion his dog. The Trapper, while he continued his customary industries, shortened the lines of his trapping to that extent that he should not be compelled to stay out on the trail over night. For he used to say to himself, "Yis, I'll shorten the lines this fall so I can come in every night, fur I don't jest like the looks of things, fur it sartinly looks as ef the man was goin', and he shan't lack fur comfort while he stays, leastwise, ef my bein' round will help him any." And so the old man shortened his lines, and every evening found him at his cabin ministering to the wants of his guest, both by helpful act and cheerful word. But more than once when the old man was trailing the line of his traps he would pause, and leaning on the muzzle of his rifle remain for several minutes in profound thought, and his meditation invariably ended in the remark, "I sartinly hope that the boy is warmin' them vagabonds, and that he'll git the news in soon, fur it looks to me as ef the

man was goin'." And more than once, when skinning a mink or an otter, had one been nigh he could have heard him mutter, as he worked, "I hope the boy will git the news in soon, fur it sartinly looks as ef the man was goin'."

Yes, the man was going. Slowly, but surely, his spirit was preparing to make its exit from the body which was unable longer to minister to its strength, its joy, or its life. The sun moved southward, the ice formed in thin fringes along the edges of the streams; the sands on the beaches lost their warmth and looked damp, cakey, and cold. For days at a time the rains fell heavily, washing the bright leaves from the trees. The winds roared, and moaned, and whistled. The geese in great wedge-shapes moved southward, each wedge guided by its harsh, unmelodious call. And one day in early November the leathern clouds swept up suddenly, filling the upper dome, smothering the sun, hiding the blue sky, and soon the countless flakes fell downward; and when the Trapper looked out of his door the next morning he looked out upon a world of whiteness, and as he turned back to kindle the fire, he cast his eyes upon the face of his guest as it lay weakly placid

on the pillow, sleeping the sleep of those who have not strength or wish to wake; and as he raked the ashes from the great brands, the old man for the first time frankly confessed to himself that his hope was vain, and he said:—

“It’s no use. Things have gone wrong with the boy. *The man is goin’.*”

Still the man lingered; and though he was very weak, he was nevertheless utterly patient, and more than once made feeble attempts to be even cheerful. Indeed, it was exceedingly touching to see the effort that he was making in his weakness to appear strong and happy, as if he was inwardly fearful lest he should burden with his sadness the spirits of his host.

The Old Trapper did the best he knew to sustain and comfort his guest. He would sit in the long evenings and entertain him with the experiences of his life, both grave and mirthful, thereby shortening the otherwise tedious hours with his vivid descriptions, his wise sayings, and his humorous remarks. It was a strange sight, truly, these two men, both knowing that one was nigh to the hour when mortal companionship should end, yet neither making any allusion to the approaching event. The one entertaining the other

as best he might with spirited descriptions of men and of scenes among which he had mingled, and of stirring events in which he had been a principal actor; the other listening to the narrations with pleased interest, as if he were not already at that point at which the scenes and doings of this earth become naught, and his eyes were soon to look upon scenes invisible to mortal senses. And yet perhaps it were as well if those of us who are called upon to minister to the elect, the chosen of God to a happier life than they had lived here, should imitate more closely than is our wont the wisdom of the Trapper; for there are ministries too fine for our bungling hands to apply, and there are messages which Heaven sends to the soul too sweet and gentle for our harsh voices to speak in words. Be this as it may, the two men never alluded to the event which both felt was inevitable, and would soon occur, but continued to impart and receive entertainment as man ministers to man.

But one evening,—the Trapper had remained in and about the cabin all day from a feeling “that things can’t last much longer in this way,” as he said to himself,—one evening after the dishes had been cleared from the table and from

the little stand that stood by the side of the bed on which the Trapper's guest was lying, and the old man had seated himself in front of the fire, the man began the conversation himself.

"John Norton," he said, "day after tomorrow will be Christmas. I came to you on Thanksgiving night, and, as I have got to go away before Christmas Eve comes around, I thought I had better tell you of some things that I would like to have done when I am gone, and perhaps ask your advice about some things. I suppose you know what I mean, John Norton?"

"Yis," said the Trapper, and rising from his chair, he moved it up nearer the bed, and re-seated himself facing his guest; "yis, friend, I know what ye mean;" and for a moment the two men looked at each other, — looked at each other calmly as two spirits might look at each other when in the presence of some emergency they are about to draw together in closest companionship.

"I have certainly had a hard time on the earth; have I not, John Norton?"

"Yer trail has been all uphill, friend," answered the Trapper; and he paused a moment,

and then with his eyes still looking into the eyes of his guest, he repeated, "all uphill, friend."

"What shall I find beyond, John Norton?" queried the man.

"Ye'll find it all level, friend," said the Trapper.

"Do you think," asked the man again, "do you think it will be hard for me to die?"

"It will be easy, friend," answered the Trapper.

The dog, Lucky, who was lying on the bed near his master's feet, crept softly up along the side of the body until he could command the faces of both speakers, and as the dialogue advanced he watched them alternately.

"Why do you think I shall die easily?" the man asked.

"Ye be too weak to die hard," the old man responded.

"Are you certain, John Norton?"

"I'm sartin," was the reply.

The dialogue had been carried on in the briefest possible sentences; and between each sentence there was a pause. Each spoke with the deliberation of a man asking and answering momen-

tous questions. In a moment the dialogue proceeded :—

“ I shall find her over there, shall I not ? ” asked the man.

“ You will find her,” was the sententious response.

“ In a body ? ”

“ In a body,” was the answer.

“ And the unknown, those I have never seen, John Norton ? ”

“ The Maker of sight will give ye new eyes there, and ye’ll see.”

After this there was silence. The man evidently was pondering, as a man ponders when he lies on the edge of the Great Unseen. A log in the fireplace broke in the middle and flamed brilliantly. One of the hounds rose, turned round, and lay down again. Lucky rubbed his head in mute tenderness against the arm of his master that lay within reach.

Outside the world was white. The moon stood in the sky. Above the moon — what was there above the moon ? — Heaven ? Perhaps.

“ Where shall I go, Old Trapper, when I go out of this body and this cabin ? ”

“ All old trails eend at the edge of the Great

Clearin'. From there each sperit blazes its own line," answered the Trapper. "I have seed where a good many trails stopped, friend. I have never seed the direction they took arter that."

"It would be comforting to know just what would happen after death," mused the man.

"Ye never know what a sunrise is till ye see it," returned the Trapper; "it'll be sunrise—sunrise arter night—that's enough;" and the old man said it with the reverence of profoundest trust.

The man toyed with one of Lucky's ears a moment,—looked at him as a man can only look at a creature from whom he had received no pain, but who has given to him such faith and love as belong only to deep affection,—and then he said:—

"Will Lucky be there?"

It was a strange coincidence—a strange coincidence, truly;—but when the man asked, "Will Lucky be there?" the dog, with loving tongue, lapped the back of his master's hand, as it lay against his muzzle. Looked into his master's face and lapped his hand. That was all.

"Yer question is answered," said the Trapper.

"I accept the answer," said the man. "A creature of such intelligence and such affection cannot die. Such love can never perish."

After this for several minutes neither spoke. At length the Trapper said:—

"Ye said, friend, ye had somethin' to tell me, —some directions and the like;—somethin', perhaps, ye wanted done, and maybe it's as well ye should speak of it now. I've done a good many things fur redskin and white both arter they was gone; and ef ye want anythin' done, friend, ef the doin' of it be within the range of my gifts, ye have only to say it; fur it will be done accordin' as ye say."

"Of course," said the man, speaking after a pause, "I want you to bury my body after I have left it."

"It shall be done," responded the Trapper.

"I wish you would bury it just by the rock, on the bank to the east, which commands a view up the lake."

"It's a cheerful spot for a grave," answered the Trapper, "fur the view is a good un. And yer body, when ye have left it, shall be buried where ye say."

Again there was a pause.

“Have ye any wish,” asked the Trapper, “as to how I should bury yer body, arter ye’re gone? Any directions about the sarvice, — any varses of Scriptur’ or the like?”

“None at all,” answered the man; “you may follow your own notions, John Norton. There will be but one mourner;” and he looked at his dog.

“Two,” returned the Trapper.

“Thank you,” replied the man; “I believe you,” and he smiled gratefully.

“What about the dog?” said the Trapper.

The man hesitated a moment, and then timidly, “He can be of no service to you?”

The Trapper understood the hesitation of his guest, and answered:—

“The dog shall stay with me till he dies. He shall not lack for food, and a corner of the hearthstone shall be his.”

“That is all, I think,” said the man, “unless — but he *won’t get it.*”

“I don’t think he will,” said the Trapper; “no, I don’t think he will; but ef he should, what do ye wish done with it then?”

“I have thought it all over,” said the man. “I held to it as my last hope; but he would

have sent us word before now. In my pack you will find a paper; in it are written directions. There will be nothing to give, but, if there were, the paper gives it as I would have it given."

"Is there anything else?" asked the Trapper.

"Yes," said the man, and he stretched forth his hand, which the Trapper met with his own, "yes, John Norton, there is something else: the gratitude of a dying man, with a bed to die on, because you have given it to him. A house to die in, because you opened its doors at his coming. The gratitude of a dying man who owes more happiness in the last year of his life than the world had given him in twenty years, to you. The gratitude of a dying man who knows his body will have burial by friendly hands, and not be put in the paupers' corner, by the cold charity of those who are glad to get rid of a beggar. The God of the friendless reward you abundantly, Old Trapper, as your deeds deserve, and give you peace in your dying hour, as your goodness has given me, and a friendly hand to bury your body as you, I know, will bury mine!"

"Amen," said the Trapper; and the two men

unclasped their hands, the one turning toward the fire, the other sinking back upon the pillow, from which in his earnestness he had partially risen.

The Trapper busied himself for a few moments in mending the fire. He placed some large logs in such a way that they would hold their heat during the night; and then, as he prepared to go to his own bed, he said: —

“Friend, you will wake me ef you want anythin’ durin’ the night. A word will be enough: I sleep light.”

“Yes, I will wake you if I want anything,” answered the man. “I feel as if I should sleep now.”

This was all that was said. In a few moments the Trapper stretched himself on his bed and fell asleep. The man moved himself on to his other side, put his hand under his cheek, and in a moment he, too, fell asleep.

And so both slept. One awoke,—the Trapper,—awoke at earliest dawn; but the other slept on,—slept through the dawn, and the day; slept on and woke not forever, at least, the eyes of his body never opened, for *THE MAN WHO MISSED IT* was gone.

The Trapper awoke, and, stepping to the bedside of his guest, gave one look, and then he went to the large chest, took a piece of white cloth from its depths, and spread it tenderly over the sleeper's face, and as he turned away said simply to himself:—

“ Perhaps it was the best way.”

Christmas Day! In the cities the bells were ringing. In the wilderness no motion stirred the air into sound. On the bank which commanded the view up the lake, near the rock, was a grave—a grave half filled. At one end of the grave stood the Trapper, leaning on his shovel. At the other end of the grave stood a dog shivering. Far up the lake a runner on snowshoes was hurrying toward the north. When he reached the northern shore and clomb the bank, the grave was filled. The runner took a letter from his breast pocket and handed to the Trapper. The Trapper took it, studied the address a moment, and said:—

“ Friend, ye'll find fire and food in the cabin.”

The man understood the command, and shuffled toward the house.

The old man broke the seal, and spreading the letter out on his knee studied its contents. The

hand in which it was written was none of the plainest to eyes unused to penmanship.

“ I don’t git the run of all of it,” said the old man to himself; “ but the boy says he’s got his case, and here’s a figger 2 and a 3 and a 5,— yis, that’s a 5,— and the three ciphers be plain. Two hundred and thirty-five thousand dollars,— it’s a big sum, no doubt,— though I don’t quite git the size of the figgers.” And the old man looked at the letter, and then he looked at the grave. “ It’s a big sum — it’s a big sum,” he added, as he turned toward the cabin. “ The boy has done well, but the news comes a leetle too late.”

It was evening. The Old Trapper sat in his cabin alone. In his hand was the letter the runner had brought him. By dint of great perseverance he had mastered every word of its contents. It was written in Tom’s happiest vein, and told of a great success. The old man folded the letter carefully, laid it on the table, and again he said :—

“ It came a leetle too late ; yis, it came a leetle too late. I’ll go and see where Lucky is ; ” and rising from his chair, he put on his cap and opened the door. The moon was shining at its full, and as he neared the grave he saw the object of his search lying at full length upon it. He

whistled to him, but he did not stir. He approached and put his hand upon the body. The dog was dead.

The Old Trapper rose, looked a moment at the grave and at the dead dog upon it, and as he turned away again he said:—

“ Perhaps it was the best way.”

Perhaps it was.

That night one looking through the window might have seen the Old Trapper sitting by the fire with a book on his knees,— a large book, bound with board covers, dressed in leather,— a book printed with large, old-fashioned letters. The old man was reading aloud to himself, moving his finger slowly along as he read the words.

“ It says here,” he muttered, “ it says here that ‘ to him that hath shall be given.’ That’s sartinly rational ef the man has behaved himself. But that ‘ from him that hath not shall be taken even that which he hath.’ That bothers me,” muttered the Trapper. “ I know it be so, for the grave by the rock proves it; but why it be so, that sartinly bothers me. Perhaps Henry can tell me when he comes in.”

END.

THE STORY
THAT THE KEG TOLD ME.

THE STORY THAT THE KEG TOLD ME.

CHAPTER I.

THE KEG.

IT was near the close of a hot, sultry day in midsummer, which I had spent in exploring a part of the shore line of the lake where I was camping, and the tortuous inlet which led into the same; and wearied with the trip I had made I was returning toward the camp. There was no motive for haste, and I was taking it easily. Indeed, I was in that quiet, contented state of mind, into which one easily falls in the woods, where his labors are dictated by his amusements and his physical necessities, and not by the duties which carry with them obligations; and I had done little more than drift with the lazily-moving current. The quiet inaction, slow as it was, corresponded with my mood; and I felt almost a regret when my boat floated out from between the shrubby banks into the open waters of the little lake.

It was a very secluded sheet of water, hidden away between the mountains, not marked on the map, and whose existence was entirely unsuspected by me until in my aimless wanderings I had a few days before accidentally stumbled upon it. Indeed, I doubt if in all the woods there is another sheet of water so shut in from observation and so likely to escape the eye, I will not say of the tourist and sportsman, but even of the hunter and trapper. It was because of this fact that I had fallen in love with it. Here was silence undisturbed by any noise of man's making. Here I could escape the prying eyes of idle and provoking curiosity. Here I could watch the habits of animated nature and study the mystery of her charm without interruption. And here the wisdom which man learns independent of utterance—the wisdom of the unspoken and the unknown—might, so far as I was fit, be received by me.

The first day on the little lake I spent in paddling around its shores, in close scrutiny of them. In every bay into which I successively paddled I expected to find a hunter's cabin. On every point I doubled I looked for a sportsman's lodge. I circled every island in my sharp quest. But

in vain. There was not a cabin nor lodge, a charred coal nor mark of a guide's axe or trapper's knife, in the entire circuit. Astonished and incredulous, I devoted another day to the examination. I even landed at every spot where Nature had suggested a camp-ground, and searched, with trained eye, for the evidence of man's visitation, but found none; not even the least trace. Springs I found, cool as iced water and clear as crystal; but neither mark of axe, nor knife, nor fire.

Convinced at last, I paddled out to the middle of the lake, feeling, as I watched the sun go down, the shadows deepen, and the stars come out, that I beheld what no human eye had ever looked upon: a place unvisited by man from the foundation of the world. In such a place the sense of time passes from you, and the sense of eternity is experienced. The years you have lived, the years of the world, are as if they were not, and you seem to be co-existent with the birth of material things. For are not the mountains around you as they were when God called them up out of the depths? And is not the sky above them the same? And the great round sun, what has changed it? Yea, and the

water, is it not as it was when its parent springs first poured it forth? In such a place one realizes that it is toil and worry and the grief of living, and not years, which make us grow old; for, behold, the years rest lightly on whatever is free of these. For that which does not work nor weep is forever young.

And so it came about that the feeling that I was the only man who had ever visited this lake was so forced upon me by what seemed indisputable evidence, that I accepted it as a fixed fact. The idea took utter possession of me, and became a part of my consciousness. There was not a sign of man nor of man's coming or going, on the shores, and therefore I knew man had never visited it. To me this was an absolute fact, as sure as life itself. Well, as I was saying, it was near sunset when my boat drifted on the current that flowed with easy motion from the little inlet, out upon the quiet bosom of the lake. The sun was already sinking in the west, and the peculiar silence which attends the close of a summer's day in solitary places possessed the atmosphere. The heat was fast leaving the air and the coolness of the coming night was growing perceptible to the senses. My camp

was only a short mile down the lake, and toward it, with easy stroke of the paddle, I urged my homeward course. "To-morrow," I said to myself, as I paddled along, "I will leave the lake. It is too lonely even for me, and its steady, unbroken silence day after day is getting oppressive. I am undoubtedly the only man that was ever on this sheet of water; even the deer here do not know what sort of an animal I am, and the rats will scarcely get out of the way of my boat. I will move out of this to-morrow, nor will I stop until I find some traces of my kind."

Thus talking to myself I paddled along, watching the reflections of sky and clouds in the clear unruffled depths beneath, and thinking of the centuries in which they had received and reflected back the changes in the firmament suspended above them. I had already come to the point on the other side of which my camp lay, when my paddle, as it moved forward for another stroke, struck against something floating in the water. I might not have noticed it, perhaps, but for the fact that it sounded hollow as my paddle struck against it. Curious, because of the peculiarity of the sound, to know what it was, with a quick turn of my wrist I reversed

my paddle, checked the boat in its course, and with a sharp stroke sent it backward along the line of its wake. As I repassed the object I reached down, and, finding I could raise it, lifted it into the boat. I will confess I started as if an electric current had been shot unexpectedly into me. It was a KEG!

Now, finding a keg in some places would not be very surprising: in a ship yard for instance, or in a cooper's shop, a farmer's cellar, or in a liquor saloon; for in such places kegs are plenty and you expect to see them. Nor would it have astonished me had I met it on a frequented river, or in any place where men come and go; but to find a keg on this lonely lake, where I felt man had never been — where no living soul had ever existed — was, as you will admit, reader, a startling experience. Nevertheless, there it was — a real keg, with oaken staves and iron bands, with a bottom intact, and perfect in all respects save that the head was missing. As I recall it now it is really laughable the way I sat and stared at it. I rubbed my eyes to make sure of my sight. I tapped it with the blade of my paddle and rolled it half over and then back again, to make sure that it was what it seemed.

Convinced at last, I sat and looked at it, questioning. Where did it come from? How did it get there? Who brought it, and when, and for what purpose? Where is he who brought it? Is he living or dead, and where is his camp? These and like interrogations I put to myself as I sat in my boat on that lonely lake, in the growing darkness, looking at that KEG. "Well," I said at last, speaking aloud, as one quickly forms the habit of doing, when alone, "well, sitting here and staring at it don't answer such questions, nor satisfy my hunger, either; and I had better shove in to camp and get supper."

When supper was over and the necessary wood for my fire laid in for the night, I went out for a while, as was my wont, upon the point, for a quiet smoke, and to observe the appearance of the night.

Of the beauty of such a place and hour those who never journeyed beyond the haunts of men know nothing. The sky was without a cloud. The air was breathless. Even the pines had forgotten in slumber their mournful plaint, and stood like so many shadows, dense, motionless, and dumb. The water was as moveless as the atmosphere. It received the heaven as a mirror

receives a face. It stole and appropriated the luster of the firmament, and borrowed from the bespangled sky an ornamentation for its blank spaces as glorious as the heaven's own. The sky was blue-black, and out of its cerulean gloom the pointed stars shot gleams of many-colored fire. The mountains, somber and vast, rested on their broad bases as if their foundations were laid in everlasting silence. The odors of the forest filled the damp air like incense. A loon far down the lake, as if oppressed by the all-pervading silence, poured into the still air the prolonged sound of its mournful call. It entered into, and lingered sadly for a moment in, the air, then passed away, making the silence that followed even more profound. Deeply affected by the spell of the lonely place and the hour, I rose from the stone on which I had been sitting, crossed the point, and returned to my little camp.

I busied myself for a moment or two in starting my fire, and when the flames of it rose clear and strong I seated myself with my back against a pine, and half reclining gazed off upon the lake. As I thus sat watching the reflection of the firelight in the water, my eyes fell upon the KEG. It seemed, in some sort, a kind of com-

panion to me, alone as I was; a visible bond binding me to my kind; a reminder of the life that men were living in the great, roaring, busy world outside and beyond the lonely lake on whose silent shore I then was lying. It reminded one of life,—or what men call life,—the getting and the giving; the saving and the spending; the loving and the hating; of the thousands far away. I fell again to wondering whence it came, and by whom it was brought over the mountains, and for what purpose;—wondering what was its history, and what had become of him who once handled it;—whether he were living or dead, and a hundred other things such as one might fancy in such a spot, in such an hour, looking at such an object so strangely found. It may be I was awake; it may be I was asleep; but as I was thus looking steadily and curiously at it, and wondering strange things about it, it seemed to change its appearance, and become different from a KEG; even a MAN; a little man; a very little man,—a man not more than eighteen inches high, with the queerest little legs, and the funniest little body, and the tiniest face one ever saw,—but still a *man*. And, then, standing bolt upright and looking straight at me

with its little gleaming eyes, that glowed like glistening beads,— wonder of wonders! it opened its diminutive mouth, and began to TALK!

THE STORY OF THE KEG.

“ I suppose,” it said — and as it began to speak it leaned slightly toward me as a man might in lifting himself upon his toes—and its ludicrous-looking face took to itself a grave expression, funny to see, — “ I suppose,” it said, “ that you are very much astonished to hear me talk, as a man can, and to know that I even have a mouth at all; but I have, sir, a very good mouth indeed, and a tongue inside of it, too, as you will learn before I have done telling my story. For I have seen and heard strange things, both before and since I came into these woods, and had many queer experiences, of which I propose to tell you if you will only sit still and hear me, and not go clean off to sleep as you seem inclined to do. O yes,” it continued, “ I desire to tell you my story; the story of the man who brought me here; why he did it, and what came of it; and how he lived and died. And it is a very sad story indeed; and it pains me even to recall it.” And here the KEG lifted one of its little thin hands, and placed

it with great emphasis upon its heart, "but it contains a lesson which it were well that all men who strive to be rich and are growing to love money, should hear, and I trust that what I tell to you to-night, you will some day tell to them; and I hope it will do them good, and be a warning to them, and make them wiser than was the poor man who once owned me, and who died right here on the point off which you found me, — peace be to his soul! and, indeed, I think he did find peace in the end, although he found it by a weary way, and a steep one, and one which led him nigh into hell. But I will go back to the beginning and tell you all just as it happened, and the reason of things as I saw and felt them long years ago.

"The earliest remembrance I have of myself is of the cooper's shop where I was made; and a nice looking keg I was then, too, although you may not believe it judging by my present appearance. But that was many years ago, and you must remember that years wear the life and beauty out of kegs as much as they do out of men; and although I look so worn and weakly now, yet I can recall the time that my staves were all smooth and clean, so that the oak grain

showed clearly from top to bottom of me, and my steel hoops were as bright and shiny as steel can be. I have had many hard knocks since then, and seen hard usage enough to drive the very staves out of me time and again; but the cooper that made me, made me on his honor, and took a deal of honest pride in putting me together, as every workman should in doing his work. And I remember as if it were but yesterday — for I have laughed over it many a time when I had poor reason to laugh at anything — that when I was finished, and the cooper had sanded me off and oiled me so that my side fairly shone, he set me up on his bench and said to his apprentice boy: ‘There, that keg will last till the Judgment Day, and well on toward night at that.’”

CHAPTER II.

THE MISER.

“WELL, one day, a few weeks after, a man came into the shop and asked the master: ‘Have you a good strong keg for sale?’ And he put the question in such an earnest, half spiteful and half suspicious way, that I fairly started within my hoops, and opened my eyes wide to take a good look at him; and a very peculiar man I saw, too, I assure you. He was quite a young looking man, not more than forty years of age; of good height and strongly built. He was a gentleman evidently, although his face was darkly tanned and his clothes were old and threadbare. His mouth was rather small than large. His lips were thin and had a look of being tightly drawn over the teeth—at least it seemed so to me. His chin was very long, and was joined at the base to large, strong jaws. His hair was brownish-black, and not over-abundant; indeed, I am not sure that he had not even then begun to grow slightly bald. But the remarkable feature of his face was his eyes. They were

blue-gray in color, smallish in size, and set in deep under the arch of the eyebrows. How hard and steel-like they were, and restless as a rat's! And what an intense look of suspicion there was in them,—a half-scared, defiant look, as if their owner felt every one to be his enemy, against whom he must stand on his guard, and whom he might at any instant have to fight and kill. Ah, what eyes they were! and how they came and went to and from your face, and shot their glances at you and into you — aye, and through you, too. I grew to know them well afterward, and to know what the strange, wild light in them meant; but of that by and by.

“ ‘Have you got a good, strong keg to sell, I say?’ he shouted to my master, who was hammering away at a barrel so that he had not heard the man enter, much less his question. ‘A good stout keg?’ said my master, as he turned around and looked squarely at the questioner. ‘I should say that I had, Mr. Roberts; do you want one?’ ‘Yes,’ returned the other, ‘I do, but I want a strong one,—*strong*, do you *hear?*’—and he took a step toward my master as if he meant to strike him. ‘Strong enough to hold the devil himself if he were in it, or a sinner’s hope of

heaven, either, if you like that better,' and he sneered the sentence out as if the blessed hope of Paradise were fit only to point a fool's joke. 'Well, I don't know much about the devil, Mr. Roberts,' rejoined my master,— 'not so much as you do, it may be; and as to one's hope of heaven, I don't build kegs to keep that in; but there's a keg'—and my master tapped me with his mallet until I rang clear as a bell—'that I made with my own hands, from the best of stuff, and I said to the boys when I finished it that it would last till the Day*of Judgment; and I verily believe it will, if white oak staves and steel hoops can last that long.' 'I didn't ask you anything about the Day of Judgment, or anything else the long-winded parsons talk about and frighten their cowardly followers with,' snarled the other. 'All I want is a good strong keg—strong as can be made of wood and iron—and if that keg is what you say it is, I want it and will take it, if you won't cheat me at the bargain, as I dare say you would like to do; what is your price, eh?' Well, the price was set, the money paid with a muttered protest, and Mr. Roberts hoisted me up under his arm and hastened with me out of the shop.

“Well, you can imagine that I felt very anxious about myself, and wondered as I was being hurried along, where I was being taken, and to what use I was to be put; but I made up my mind to do my duty and hold whatever my new master should give to my trust so that my maker might not hear ill of me; but I little thought what was to befall me, or what I should have to bear as the years went round. For I have seen dreadful sights in my time, and beheld things too awful to declare. For I have seen the undoing of a man, and the wreck of a human soul!

“Well, as I was saying, my new master hurried me along without stopping to speak to anyone, although we passed many, and I noticed that no one of all we passed spoke to him, but looked at him coldly or wonderingly, and that he, whenever we were about to meet anyone, whether man, woman, or child, only clutched me the more tightly and hurried on the faster. At last we came to a common looking sort of a house, set back from the road, with a very high fence built clear around it, and a heavy padlock on the gate, and great strong, wooden shutters at every window. Into this my master entered and set me down carefully upon the floor. This done,

he went back to the door and locked it, and drew two large iron bolts or bars across it, securing them most carefully in the sockets. He then went to every window and examined them to see if each was fastened. He carefully examined every room and closet, even looking into the ash hole and the oven in the chimney. Then lighting a candle he went down into the cellar, and after that up into the attic, carrying the candle in one hand and a great club or bludgeon in the other.

“By this time I had made up my mind that I had fallen into the hands of a maniac, and that my new master was insane. Leastwise I did not know what to make of him, or what was to be the upshot of his strange ways. After a while he came back to the room where he had left me, and took me up and set me on the table; and starting the upper hoop proceeded to take out one of my heads. At this I was thoroughly frightened, and kept my eyes on him wherever he went, as I wanted to see what his strange conduct meant, and what he would do next. When he had taken one of my heads out, he went to an old drawer under the cupboard and got a large sheepskin, with the wool closely clip-

ped; and with a pair of large shears proceeded to fit me with a lining of it. I must say that he did it with remarkable cleverness, and that when he was done with me I was lined as well as any tailor could line me. But what it all meant I couldn't guess; and so I watched and waited. For you will admit that no keg was ever treated as he was treating me, and that I had good reason to be surprised.

“After he had done lining me with the soft skin he seemed more easy, and less nervous, and he put his hands inside of me and felt of his work and was evidently pleased at it; for he rubbed his hands together, and his eyes glistened, and he said to himself: ‘There! I call that a pretty good fit; I don't think old Tim, the tailor, would have done it better.’ And then he laughed to himself and rubbed his hands together again as if he had said a very funny thing. By this time it was well on toward night, and he kindled a fire in the fireplace—a very small fire it was, only a little thin blaze made of three or four short sticks which looked as if they had been picked up in the roadway, and a handful or two of chips. But small as the blaze was he managed to heat a little kettle of water by it and

steep a cup of tea, which he placed upon an old board table alongside of a loaf of bread, and then he sat down by the table and began to eat the bread and drink the tea. And this was all the supper he had, and I thought it very strange that so large a man should be content with such a supper; but I grew used to the sight afterward, and ceased to wonder, as you will when you know the cause of his frugality.

“After he had done eating, he wrapped the remainder of the bread carefully in a piece of paper, and put it away with the little teakettle in the cupboard. And then he went to the door and re-examined the bolts, and looked closely at all the shutters, while I stood and wondered what his strange actions meant, and why he was so anxious that the doors and windows should all be fastened so tightly; for the neighborhood was a good one, and the people law-abiding, so much so that the doors of half the houses in the village were never locked of nights, even from one year’s end to another.

“When he had done all this, he brought the club or bludgeon that I had seen him carry upstairs with him when he went up into the attic, and laid it on the table beside me, and also a

large thick knife, with a strong horn handle, which he had taken from the mantelpiece where it had been lying; and then he went to the ash hole in the chimney, and brought the ash pail, which was full of ashes; and he went to the cupboard, and brought an old earthen jar; and from under the bed he fetched a bag; and from a chamber overhead he brought a small box; and from the cellar he returned with a sack, all damp with earth. All the while I kept my eyes well open, you may believe, wondering what it all meant, and what there was in the pail and the jar and the box and the bag and the sack. Well, when he had these all side by side near the table, he sat down and out of the ash pail he took a small pot, and, having blown the ashes off it with great care, he turned it bottom upward on the table, and — merciful heaven! what do you think was in it?

“EAGLES! GOLDEN EAGLES!

“Then he took the bag and untied the cord that held the mouth, and emptied it upon the table, and it, too, was full of *eagles* — gold eagles! And then one after the other, he opened the jar and the box and the sack, and out of each and all he poured a great stream of bright golden

eagles! Oh, what a pile of them there was! What a heap they made! How they gleamed and glistened! How they jingled and rang! How they rattled and clinked as he poured them down upon the dark boards! And how his eyes gleamed in their deep sockets as they saw the golden stream, and how the thin lips drew apart as the coins flowed out, until his teeth showed their line of white back of them, and his hands shook and trembled as if the palsy was in them!

“It was a dreadful sight to see him sit down, and, leaning over the table, run his hands under the yellow heap and lift the pieces up so that the bright bits flowed over and out of his hollow palms and ran down through his parted fingers in shining streams. And then to hear him laugh as he played with his glistening treasure. How mirthless his laughter was — hard and sharp and ringing like the metallic ring of the coin itself. Oh, it was dreadful to think that a human soul could love money so! And he did love it, — wildly, madly, love it, — love it with all the strength of his strong nature. And this he did not disguise nor deny to himself; but admitted it, and gloried in it, too, with a most wicked and

blasphemous glorying, as the Arch Fiend himself is said to glory in his own sin.

“He would take an eagle up and look at it as a father might at the face of his favorite child, and pat it with his palm, and smooth the surface of it with a finger tip as if it could feel a caress. Ah me, it was dreadful! And then he would take a piece up and talk to it and say, coaxingly, ‘Thou art better than a wife,’ and to another, ‘Thou art sweeter than a child,’ and to another yet, ‘Thou art dearer than father or mother.’ And to the great pile of shining gold, he would say, as he leaned over it, ‘O my beauties, the parsons may say what they please, but you are better than a far-off heaven.’ Ah, such blasphemy as I heard that night! How the sweet and blessed things of human life were derided, and the things that are divine and holy sneered at!

“At last he fell to counting them, and by the way he did it I knew he had done it often; done it so many times that he counted as men do things by habit,—mechanically. He would say: ‘ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR, FIVE, SIX, SEVEN, EIGHT, NINE, TEN,—GOOD! ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR, FIVE, SIX, SEVEN, EIGHT, NINE, TEN,

—GOOD!’ And so go on, faster and faster, until his breath was gone; and then he would catch it again, and start anew. “ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR, FIVE, SIX, SEVEN, EIGHT, NINE, TEN,—GOOD!’ Oh, it was awful to think of an immortal being loving MONEY so!

“For a long time he counted on; counted until his hands shook, and the sweat stood thick on his forehead, and his eyes gleamed and glowed as if he were mad. And perhaps he was mad,—as all men are who live for gain, and whose hearts are fired with the awful lust for gold. So he counted on. And when he had counted all,—even to the very last,—the old dark boarded table was covered thick with little piles of tens; and he arose with a jump like a maniac, and stood above the table and shouted until the old house rang again:—

“‘SIXTEEN THOUSAND, SIX HUNDRED AND SIXTY-SIX DOLLARS! SIXTEEN THOUSAND, SIX HUNDRED AND SIXTY-SIX DOLLARS!’

“Well, after a while he sobered down and became quiet, and began to pick the dollars up and pack them away inside of me,—carefully, one by one, as a mother might lay her children in their beds to sleep,—and this he kept on doing

until the last shining coin had been taken from the table, and I was full to the very brim. Then he put my head in its place, and drove the upper hoop on snug, and put me in the bed, and the great knife under his pillow; and, blowing out the light, lay down beside me and putting one arm across me as if I were a child, fell asleep. And over the old house in which the miser lay clasping me to his heart, I knew that the stars were shining; and beyond the stars, with eyes that never slept, I knew that the great God was looking down upon him and me."

CHAPTER III.

THE MISER'S FEAR.

“WELL, things went on in the same fashion day after day, and night after night; but getting worse all the time. My master did little work, and of course earned little money,—only enough to buy his bread and tea, with now and then a little piece of meat. He seemed to have no desire to get more, but was only anxious to keep what he had. And about this he was so anxious that it kept him in a fever of excitement all the time. For days he would scarcely go beyond the doorway, and if he saw a man coming along the road he would come in with great haste, close the shutters and bar the door as if he feared the man was a robber and was coming to rob him. And indeed this was his feeling. He was never for an instant free of the fear of losing his money. He would mutter about it in the day-time, and he would mutter about it in the night when he was asleep. Many a time have I heard him, in the dead of the night when the old house was as still as a tomb, suddenly break out and

say, 'Oh, you don't want my money, eh? You came for it, you know you did, and you hope by crying to get it out of me; but you shan't have a dollar of it; no, not a dollar! if it would save your soul! D'ye hear?' And then he would put out his arms and wrap them around me and strain me to him, muttering, and murmuring about his 'Beautiful eagles. My own, own EAGLES, they want to get you from me. I know them; but they shall never do it, for I would kill them if they tried.' And he would grind and grit his teeth and hoarsely repeat the word, '*kill,—kill,*' as he sunk again into a heavy sleep.

"It was bad enough to hear his muttering when all was quiet and peaceful, and his sleep was undisturbed; but when the night was stormy and wild, and the wind made the old house shake, and the rain was slashed in great sheets against the windows, and the timbers in the framework creaked and groaned;—at such times, he would toss and moan in his bed, shriek and clutch me with his fingers, leap up and strain and tug and strike as if he were wrestling with an unseen person, who was striving to carry me away. Indeed, waking or sleeping, he was tormented with a deadly fear; and the fear was born of the suspicion that

some one would succeed in stealing me, and the treasure in me.

“And this suspicion it was that had poisoned his whole life, and made him hate his kind, and driven him into the wretched strait he was in, when I came to him. And a more wretched strait no mortal was ever in; for what is worse than the suspecting of one’s kind, even of one’s wife and child; yea, and of the man of God himself, whose love for you is as God’s,—the deep, steady, ministering love of the soul. And this was just his case, as I found out one day. And this was the way it came about:—

“It was summer; and for the sake of comfort—for the old house was damp and close—he had left the door wide open, and, seating himself in his chair, had fallen asleep. Indeed, I was rather drowsy myself, and was fast dropping off into a nap, when I heard my master give a horrible yell, and leap with a frightful oath to his feet. My eyes, as you can imagine, came open with a snap; and the sight I beheld nearly upset me. In the doorway stood a man and woman; and by his dress I knew the man to be the old village pastor, and the woman I soon learned was my master’s wife. For a minute my master stood

looking at them, and then he said abruptly, 'What in the Devil's name did you come here for?'

" 'John,' said the woman, 'your child, Mary, is dying; and I thought you, who are her father, might want to see her before she passed away; ' and her voice choked, and I saw her breast under her dress heave with suppressed sobs.

" 'Dying, is she?' said my master brutally. 'I don't believe it: it's a trumped-up story of yours to get me away from here, that you may steal my gold; but you can't fool me with your lying, and you might as well get away from here, both of you.'

" 'John,' returned the woman,—and as she spoke the great tears came into her eyes, and her hands twitched convulsively,— 'John, I never lied to you, nor to anyone, in my life, and you know it. Mary is dying, as the parson here can tell you; and I dare not let her die, and not give you a chance to see her; for she was the last one born to us, and you did love her before the cursed love of gold in you drove from your heart all other loving. And I said the father should see the child before she dies: it is his right; and so I have come and told you. And, besides,

Mary herself last night spoke your name in her sleep, and talked in her wanderings of you; and this morning she said suddenly, "I wish I could see father before I die. I dreamed of him last night: it was an awful dream; and I wish I might tell it to him before I go. It might be it would do him good, and win his heart from his dreadful gold." And so, John, I got this man of God to come along with me, that he might bear witness to my truth, and perhaps speak a word of wisdom to you.'

"While the woman had been speaking, my master had stood looking at her with the same scowl on his face, and the same hard, suspicious expression in his eyes. Not a muscle changed, nor a line softened. So he stood a moment, glaring at them; and then he said to the minister, who was leaning on his cane,—for he was old and weak, and his head was white as snow,—'Well, what have you got to say?'

"'John Roberts,' said the old man solemnly, 'I have much to say; for I bring a message, not from your dying child, but from your living Lord. I remember when I baptized you as a child at the altar, on the day your pious parents gave you in holy covenant to God. And I re-

member when I married you to this woman here, your wife; and I remember your early promise, and the happiness you had yourself and made for others, until the lust of gold possessed you. And I have known your downward path, and how that which God meant for good became, by your perversion of its use, an evil to you,—yea, an evil which poisoned all your life, and changed the course of it; turned you against your friends, made you brutal to your wife and child, and brought you to the gate of hell, where you now stand,—a miserable miser! All this I have watched and seen and known; and all this I have warned you against time and again in past years, and in the name of Him who was sold to death by a miser like yourself. And now I call upon you to repent, and by true repentance and deep contrition find mercy in Him whom you have sold out of your heart and life, and in whose eyes you are another Judas, yet lacking repentance. Repent, therefore, and return to your right mind, lest a worse thing fall upon you, and the curse of your life be doubled upon you in your death, even that as you are now deserted of man you may in that dreadful hour find yourself deserted of God. And as for your child, as

your wife has said, she is dying, and she has asked for you. She bids you come to her before she dies. For God has spoken to her in a vision, as He did to some of old, and revealed to her what shall be if you repent not, — a dreadful death, in a wild spot, with no one nigh, and a darkness round about you in your death-hour like the darkness that surrounds the damned, — all this she has seen with eyes prepared by the mystery of the Unknown to see it; and I pray you, therefore, as one standing between the living and the dead, that you come right speedily and see your child and hear her message, lest she die, and leave it unspoken, and what she has seen in vision be realized in fact, and you be lost in death even as you are already lost in life.'

"He paused, and his face shone as one who speaks beyond the measure of the spirit of man, — even by the measure of the Spirit of God, — and his aged hands shook; and when he had ended, his lips continued to move, as in the case of one who follows an exhortation with an inaudible prayer.

"But my master remained unmoved. He heard the words of his old pastor, as he had the words

of his wife, with the same scowling, sinister look in his eyes; the same set doggedness of face, the same sneering expression on his lips. He stared at them a moment, and then shouted: ‘You LIE! both of you,—you want my money, you mean to steal it from me. Everybody wants it; there isn’t an honest man in the world. All are thieves. All love gold. You do. I know by your looks you love it. You can’t fool me by your tears and your preaching. You get out of this house or I will kill you,’ and he swore a horrible oath, and, stepping back a step, he seized the bludgeon and swung it round his head, and stamped his foot upon the floor and swore at them again; his eyes glowed like hot coals, and the froth hung on his lips. The woman ran screaming from the house, but the old pastor stood his ground, and faced him, and said:—

“‘John Roberts, thou art a doomed man. Thou hast denied the truth and resisted the Spirit, and Satan hath thee in full possession. The lust of gold that destroys many is in thee strong and mighty, and only God can save thee, nor He against thy will. Repent, or thou shalt perish in a lonely spot, on a dark night, with none to help nor hear thy cries; and thy gold shall perish

with thee.' And so saying, he turned and slowly left the house.

"For a moment my master stood, and then he rushed for the door and locked it, and slid the great strong bars into their sockets; and then he came and lifted me upon the table, and patted me with his hand, and laughed and said: 'My gold! my gold!' And when night came he took my head out and poured the shining pieces upon the table, and played with them for hours, and then, as was his fashion, he fell to counting them by tens in the same manner as was his custom, saying: 'ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR, FIVE, SIX, SEVEN, EIGHT, NINE, TEN, GOOD!' until he had counted them to the very last one. As he counted the frenzy grew on him, and when his task was over, and the old, dark-wood table was all yellow with the gold pieces lying in stacks of ten, he was wild in the joy of his terrible lust. He leaped and danced around the glistening coins, and shouted till the old house rang: 'SIXTEEN THOUSAND SIX HUNDRED AND SIXTY-SIX!'

"And then he put them all back within me, fastened my head in tightly, laid me in his bed, laid himself beside me, and, putting an arm around

me, he fell asleep. And I knew that over the old house the stars were shining brightly, and that above the stars the Great God, with eyes that never slept, was looking calmly down on him and me.

“But when he woke in the morning he was not as he had been, but more nervous and savage-like. He did not unbar the door during the whole day, nor open the heavy shutters an inch, but kept all closed and dark. And he was muttering and talking to himself all day. He had the look of one who was planning some deep plot, nor could I make out what it was; but I caught enough of his talk to know that he was more suspicious of losing his money than ever, and trusted no one, but was afraid of all men, known and unknown, and was thinking and planning how to make his money safe and get me to some spot where no one could steal me. Once I heard him say: ‘All men are thieves. I suspect them all. No one with money is safe among them. They will get it yet, unless I go where they cannot find me.’ And then he would curse his kind and swear.

“At last he suddenly stopped in his tramping up and down the room, and shouted: ‘I’ll go, go

where they cannot find me. Go where I can be alone and can count my money as much as I wish, in the broad day, under the bright sun or stars, and see it glint and glisten in the bright light. Won't that be glorious! — to be alone with my money, where I can spread it all out in broad day and see it shine, and count it over and play with it, with no one nigh to scare me nor make me hide it away, for fear of its being seen and stolen. Men, curse them, are what I dread. I will go where there is not a man! ' "

CHAPTER IV.

THE MISER IN THE WOODS.

“AFTER this he said no more, but packed up the few things he had, and rolled me up in a blanket and put me in a sack, so I could neither see nor hear a single thing that was done or said, and that is all I know of what happened for many a day, only I knew by my feeling that I was being *carried and carried*, over rivers and mountains, and through forests that were wide and deep, until one day I felt myself put in a boat; and on we went, day after day, night after night, until one afternoon, I knew not when, neither the year nor the day, the boat stopped, the bag in which I was, was carried ashore, and, for the first time for many a day, I was taken out of it, and I saw the sunlight once more, and behold! I was on the very point off which you this evening found me.”

And here the KEG paused as one who is tired of rapid talking, or oppressed by mournful memories; and it made a motion as if it would sit down, but did not. But it put one little hand

up to its chin and rested for a moment so, and I thought it fetched a little sigh, but of that I am not sure, for it might have been a puff of wind playing with the uppermost tuft of some neighboring pine, or the sputtering of the fire, for that matter. But after a little it began again.

“You must pardon my stopping, but I have not done much talking for many a year and it really takes the breath out of me; moreover one of my heads is gone, and that makes a great difference with a keg I assure you; for we are like a great many men who manage to get along with one head, but no one sees how they do it, and all heartily wish they had another in addition to the one they have, and a better one too. And besides I am getting rather old, and I doubt if I live much longer, for ever since I have been standing here, by the fire, I have felt that I might fall to pieces at any moment,” and the keg cast an anxious look down over itself and then as if partially strengthened, at least, went on:—

“Well, things continued very much as they were at the old house for several weeks, and my master seemed happy in the thought that he had got beyond the reach of men and the danger of

their stealing me, and what I had in me. Every day when the sun shone brightly he would take me down to the point yonder, from beneath the shadow of the pines, where the sun shines clearly, and pour the treasure out in one great pile and play with it by the hour. It seemed to please him greatly to see the yellow coins shine and shimmer in the bright light, and he would lie in the sand and watch the sparkling heap by the hour, and count it all over and over again, and laugh and shout while doing it as he used to do around the old table when we were in the house. And it seemed more dreadful to me than ever before, for here everything was so still and solemn, and the sky seemed so grave, the sun so strong and bright, and the mountains so vast and majestic, and all things so suggestive of God and Eternity, that it seemed blasphemy for a human being to be thinking so much of his money. Indeed, the sky and water and mountains, and even the trees, seemed to have eyes and to be looking straight down at him as he sat there in the sand counting his money, as if wondering what use it could all be to him.

“But after a time I could see that a change was coming over my master. He grew grave and

quiet, and moved about in a noiseless way, very unlike his old fashion of acting and talking. So, gradually, a change came over him until he was not at all as he had been. He left off counting his money for days at a time, and when he did count it, it was in a listless manner, just the reverse of his old-time fashion. He would even go away and leave the yellow heap on the sand unwatched, and uncared for, while he sat looking at the shadow of the mountain in the water, or lay stretched at full length on his back, a stone for his pillow, his hands crossed on his breast and his eyes gazing fixedly up at the heavens. You may imagine that I was very much puzzled at all this, and wondered what it all meant, for I could see that something was preying on his mind, and that a great change was coming over him.

“One day he came, and packing the gold within me, put the head in with the greatest care; and when it was done he stood looking at me a moment and then said, ‘I think I will never open you again,’ and he said it in such a sad sort of a way that I was vastly puzzled. Indeed, I did not believe him, but fancied that he was not feeling over-well, and was low spirited like because of it, and that when he came to himself he would

come around and count what was in me as happily as ever. But a greater surprise was in store for me; for when he went to the camp, which was in this very place you have here to-night, he did not take me with him, but left me there alone on the beach. I did not think much of it at first, for I said to myself, he will be back by and by and carry me in with him to the camp as he always does; but the minutes passed and kept passing and still he did not come, and at last I gave him up and decided that I must pass the night where I was, alone. Well, as you can fancy, I felt very strangely in view of it, and rather nervously, too, for I had never spent a night alone by myself since my master owned me, nor outside a house or tent either, for that matter; so as I have said I felt a little nervous about it. But I made up my mind to be as brave as I might and put as good a face on the matter as I could. But it was a very strange experience I had that night, and one I have never forgotten. You see it was the first night I ever spent alone in the wilderness, and it made an impression on me I shall never forget, and although I have passed many nights since alone in this solitary spot, yet never has there been one to me like that first one.

The shadows of the mountains were so dark and heavy that they appeared to burden the lake as with a ponderous bulk, and the very water that reflected their vast sides seemed oppressed by their presence. The sky was blue-black; a grave and somber sky it was. In it only a few stars shone, and those with shortened beams. The silence was like an atmosphere. It rested upon the mountains, brooded on the water, and slept amid the shadows of the still trees. And yet, dark as it was, I felt that in it was an eye, and, silent as it was, I felt that out of it would come a voice — an Eye that looked in steady but unwrathful condemnation upon me, and a Voice that spoke in solemn judgment, although with inaudible tones.

“It seemed as if the sin of my master was being charged upon me, and that the whole universe was visiting upon me its contempt. O sir, I saw strange sights that night, and heard sounds that made me shrink within my hoops in fear. Bands of angels all robed in white, and flying on white wings, came and stood poised in the air above me, and pointed at me with their white hands, and, as they gazed, their sweet faces dilated with horror. Devils, too, great black beings and

shapes that were shapeless, whose faces were those of hell, and eyes bloodshot with torture, came, and, poising above me, would point with their black fingers insultingly downward, and laugh with horrid mirth; then sail away until their black wings faded in the farther gloom. And I heard moans in the air as of a woman moaning for bread; and prayers as of a dying child, dying with a dread at her heart for some one whose sin lay on her soul; and sounds as of many noises mixed in one: prayers and curses, oaths and snatches of hymns. And out of the stillness of the outward space—the stillness of the far-off and the far-up and the beyond, I seemed to hear a great voice continually saying: ‘THE MAN THAT LOVETH MONEY OVERMUCH IS DOOMED. THE MAN THAT LOVETH MONEY OVERMUCH IS DOOMED.’

“At last the sun rose, and right glad was I to see it, but little did I dream when I saw it come up over the mountain yonder, what would happen before it rose again. For of all days in my life that was the most eventful, and I do not expect you to believe me when I tell you what took place in it; but I shall tell you the truth, nevertheless, and of things just as they happened.

“About ten o'clock in the morning my master came to the point where I was, and his face was as I had never seen it before. It was the face of a man who had suffered much, and was suffering. His hair lay matted on his damp forehead; his eyes were bloodshot; his teeth set, and his mouth white at the corners, while his hands were clinched as the hands of one in a spasm. He came and stood directly over me, and in a voice hard and strained said: —

“‘For thee, thou cursed gold, I have wasted my life and ruined my soul.’

“This he said many times. Then he walked away and stood and talked to himself; and I heard him say: ‘*He* said, “Unless you repent, you shall die on a dark night, in a lonely spot, with no one nigh.”’ And he kept repeating, ‘On a dark night, in a lonely spot, with no one nigh.’ And then he would look around him at the trees and the mountains and the solitary shores.

“After a while he began to walk up and down the point, and wring his hands and smite them on his breast, and cry out: ‘Oh! if I COULD do it! Oh! if I COULD do it! Perhaps there would be hope for me: perhaps there would be hope

for ME!’ And he would emphasize the ME in such a plaintive, pitiful tone as was never done, I think, by man before. Once he got down on his knees, and clasped his hands together, and I wondered what he was going to do, for I had never seen a man in that position before, and it looked so queer; but in an instant he leaped to his feet and cried: ‘NO, NO! It is no use. Forgiveness is not for me: forgiveness is not for me.’

“And so the day passed, and a fine day it was, too, for though my master was in such trouble, and the grip of a dire distress was on him, yet the sun took no note of it, but shone as brightly in the sky, and the trees swung as merrily to and fro as the breeze blew through them, and the ripples ran laughingly along the curved beach as if there were never such a thing as human trouble in the world.

“Toward night, just before the sun went down, my master came, and, taking my head out, stood for a while looking at the gold within me; then he said slowly to himself: ‘Perhaps I may have strength to do it: perhaps I may have strength to do it.’ And then he sat down on the sand and gazed far off, as one whose thoughts are not in his eyes. And there in the one spot, without

moving, he sat, while the sun went down, the shadows of evening settled slowly and darkly on shore and lake and mountain range, until at last night like a mantle lay darkly on the world. There, in the stillness, my master sat, his face hidden by the gloom, thinking — I knew not what. At last he moved; and, as if too weak to rise, crawled along on the sand to my side, and steadying himself on his knees, he placed his hands together, and lifting his face to the dark blue heaven above, found speech, and began to talk to One I could not see: —

“O Thou, who art the Lord of this great world; whose eyes see every creature Thou hast made; and whose ear is open to their cry, see me to-night, and hear my prayer. Bound have I been, and bound I am, to sin. My soul, pursued by evil, knows not where to flee. My life has been a hell, and out of hell I seek deliverance here and now. Come to my aid or I am lost! Save me in mercy or I am doomed! Give Thou me strength, for I am weak, and may not do what I would do, without Thy aid. Out of this stillness speak to me. Here where no man may hear, hear Thou my cry. Thou Lord of heavenly mercy, lend me Thine aid!’

“He paused, and rising to his feet, lifted me, and started toward the bushes where he kept his boat, and placing me in it shoved out upon the lake, and paddled toward the center, saying slowly and solemnly to himself: ‘Lend me Thine aid, O Lord! Lend me Thine aid!’ At last we reached the center of the lake, and having checked the boat, he sat for a moment without saying a word; then lifting his face upward he said in a low, sweet voice: ‘Dear Lord, Thou hast given of Thy strength. I thank Thee,’ — then raised me in his arms and — ”

A rattle and a crash, as of pieces of wood falling suddenly in a heap, and my eyes came open with a snap. My fire had smouldered down, and a thin column of blue smoke was rising, unattended by flame, in a wavy spiral through the air. The moon had found an opening in the pines overhead, and was pouring its white beams upon the whiter ashes. The keg I had picked from the lake, heated by the fire, had shrunk in its staves until the rusty iron bands afforded them no support; and shaken by the slight jar of a crumbling brand, or falling pine-cone, perhaps, had tumbled inward and lay in a confused heap. I rubbed my eyes, stretched out my

chilled legs, and said to myself: "What a queer dream! I really thought that keg was talking to me. If it had kept on much longer it would have persuaded me that the old fellow, its master, or his ghost, is actually on this lake now. Egad! I think it would start even my pulse a little to see a man in a boat on this lake to-night."

Half laughing to myself at the silly suggestion that my fancy had made, I rose to my feet, stretched myself, yawned, and stepping down to the edge of the water looked off upon the lake. I am not ashamed to say that I started, and the blood chilled a little in my veins at what I saw. For there, off the point, *within twenty feet of where I found the keg, was a boat and a man sitting in it — motionless as if carved from the air!*

CHAPTER V.

JOHN NORTON THE TRAPPER.

WELL, I will admit that I was surprised, greatly surprised, for I knew that there was not a living being on that lake at sunset — nor had there been for days, or years for that matter: for there is no place in all the world, save cities, where man can go and stay even a night and not leave marks of his presence, and on all this lake shore there was not a trace of any human being. Yet in spite of all this evidence forbidding the supposition, there sat a man, paddle in hand, in a boat, not forty rods from where I stood. I knew that I was well concealed from view, for the shadow in which I stood was as dark as the matted branches of the rich cedars that lined the lake shore and projected outward over the water, could make it; and so I kept my station without moving an inch, and watched.

For a full minute the boat lay on the level water as if it had grown up out of it, and was a part of the lake itself, so steadfastly did it hold its place; and I could well guess what was pass-

ing in the mind of him whose form was as motionless as the boat, but whose eyes I knew were searching every inch of the shore line, and whose thoughts were as busy as his eyes. He had evidently come round the point as little expecting the presence of man as I had anticipated his, and some flitting spark, or the gleam of some coal,—or likelier yet the thin filament of blue smoke rising from the smouldering and ash-covered embers,—had caught his eye and brought his boat to a stand as quickly as a reversed paddle could do it. In a moment the boat began to move; so slowly, so easily, so steadily, that the eye could scarcely detect the movement. I laughed silently to myself to see the familiar motion of ambushing a camp from the water side, done so skillfully. For whoever he was, or whatever his errand, the man in the boat knew how to handle a paddle as only a few ever learn the art,—to perfection. His body never moved. The bent posture of it never changed. His head kept its fixed position. The arms worked from the shoulder-sockets, and were lifted with a movement so slow and gradual that the eye that could measure their extension and return must needs be keen of sight, nor lose its observation

by a wink. The boat did not start — it simply ceased to stand still; but that fraction of an instant at which it ceased to stand still and began to move, no human eye could tell. Slowly, slowly, so slowly that at times I doubted if it did move at all, the boat came floating on. For ten minutes had it been moving, and yet it had barely covered as many rods. Then the motion of the arms died out in the air, and the boat again stood still. But the body of the boatman still kept its fixed position, and the arms still hung suspended in the atmosphere, where they were when the will of the paddler had checked them.

“By Jove!” I said to myself, “that man acts as if he wants to murder some one, or fears some one will murder him: but he understands how to do a job like the one he is at, and I would like to know how long it has taken him to learn that use of the paddle.”

A few minutes passed, then the arms began to rise and fall again, and the boat stole slowly into motion. Again ten rods were covered; again the little boat came to a pause. It was now barely fifty yards away, and the full moon made it an easy matter to study quite closely both the boat and boatman. The boat was of the com-

mon build, sharp at either end, low-sided and light. In the bow was a pack-basket, while a hound lay crouched in the middle. A rifle was resting across the paddler's knees. Of his face I could discern little, because the moon was at his back. In a moment he laid the paddle softly across the boat; lifted his rifle as noiselessly from his knees, and rose slowly to his feet. All this had been done as only a skilled boatman and woods man could do it: not a jerk nor awkward motion in the process, but coolly, deliberately, and without the least suggestion of a sound.

"Few men could have lifted themselves from their seat in a boat like that in the style he has done it," I said to myself, "and few dogs would lie as that dog lies, in a boat maneuvered as that has been for the past twenty minutes, without stirring nose or foot. I wonder he has not scented me."

That very instant, even as the thought was passing in my mind, my ear caught the sound of the lowest possible whine from the hound; but his body never stirred, and his nose, active as it must have been, never lifted itself a hand's width from its resting place on the bottom of the boat.

"Hollo, the camp there!" said the man in

the boat suddenly. "Be ye sleeping or dead, man or ghost, whom I find in this lonely spot to-night?"

"Not dead, nor asleep," said I, speaking from the dense gloom of the overhanging cedar; "but wide awake and watchful as it behooves a man to be, in a place like this, with a man ambushing his camp in the dead of night. Put down your rifle and come into camp if you want to. The sound of a human voice coming out of your throat makes me feel friendly, whoever you are. Come in, and I will stir up the fire and we can see how we like each other's looks."

So saying, I stepped back to where my wood was piled, and proceeded to thrust a dozen pitchy knots and a huge roll of white birch-bark into the embers. The few remaining coals beneath the ashes caught eagerly at the pitch thus thrust against them, and after an instant's sputtering the inflammable material leaped suddenly into a roaring flame. As the blaze shot upward, I rose from my knees on which I had dropped to give the embers an encouraging puff, and the man, leaning on his paddle-staff, with the hound crouched at his feet, stood before me.

For a moment we stood and looked at each

other, as two men might, meeting for the first time, at such an hour, in such a place,—looked each other over thoroughly, from head to foot, and then satisfied, at least on my part, I said:—

“Old man, you are welcome.”

“Thank ye, thank ye,” replied my visitor. “I shouldn’t have dropped in upon ye in this onseemly way, and at sech an onseemly hour, but the line of yer smoke took me onawares like as I turned the p’int yender, fur I didn’t expect to find a human bein’ on these shores, and I half doubted ef a mortal man was here, till my hound got yer scent in his nose and signaled me that flesh and blood was nigh. And so I ax yer pardin for comin’ in on ye as I did, more like a thief than an honest man; but I have memories of this spot that made me think strange things, and fear that all was not right. Young man, what may yer name be?”

“I am called, when at home, Henry Herbert,” I said, “but you can split it in the middle if it would fit your mouth better in that way, and take it half at a time, and call me Henry or Herbert as you please; for I know one about as well as I do the other, and answer to either pretty readily; and since you are getting on in years, and are old

enough to be my father, with a good liberal margin at that, you had better take the first half of it; and so, if you please, you may call me Henry for short."

"Well, Henry," said the old man, and there came a beaming look of good nature into his eyes as he spoke, with the least twinkle of humor playing in and penetrating the benevolence of it, "I *am* gittin' pritty well on in years, and ye don't seem much more than a youngster to me, although ye have managed to git a pritty good growth in the time ye have been at it; and perhaps the comin' and goin' of years has put some things inside my head that boys can't be expected to git, while they have been whitenin' the outside of it; so, mayhaps, it is well enough that I should call ye by yer Christian name, as ef I was yer own father; although I have never had a boy of my own, or a wife or home either, fur that matter; onless ye can call these woods a home; for I have seen sixty year come and go sence I came into them, and the Lord has cared for me in summer's heat and winter's cold through them all,—so well that I haven't had a wish for other company than I have found with the animils and things He has made, or for any other home than

He has builded for me by His own hands." And the old man paused a moment, and looked lovingly down at the hound which lay stretched at his feet, with his muzzle resting on his paws, as if, in the dog, I could see one of the companions which had supplied with affection a heart that had missed the love of wife and children.

"Yis," he continued, "the woods have been a home for me for the number of years that measure the life of mortal man, and there is leetle in them I haven't seed, and few are the noises that natur' makes that my ears haven't heerd; and I know all their paths and their ways as well as a man in the settlements knows his dooryard. But that ain't neither here nor there,"—as if he was conscious of having fallen into a musing mood, and would check himself,—“that's neither here nor there,” he continued, “and I am glad to have run agin ye here to-night, although the seemin' of things was agin me. For I did ambush yer camp as a thief of a half-breed might; but I was taken onawares by yer camp smoke, and startled, as ye would well understand to be reasonable in me, did ye know what I know of this spot, and the strange goin's on that has been here

years ago, as I know them; and it seems queer to me to find a livin' bein' to-night, where I thought there was only a dead man's grave. But I am glad to have run agin ye, Henry Herbert, for I have heerd of ye many times in the last ten years, as one who loved the woods and the way men live in them, and knowed the proper use of a rifle, and how to handle the paddle as some born to the use of it never larn it; and I have heerd that yer eye was keen and finger sure, as a hunter's should be, and that ye let no buck run off with yer lead, but dropped him dead in his tracks where he stood — which is marcful and decent in a man who handles a rifle. And I have heerd, mor'over, that ye loved to be alone, and to find things out that natur' never tells to a company; and that ye boated up and down through the woods all by yerself, sleepin' where night overtook ye, like an honest man, and I knowed that I should some day cross yer trail and jine ye; but I leetle thought to run agin' ye here to-night, for I'd no idee that mortal man knowed this lake, save me and him whose body I buried here eleven year ago this fall." And the old man paused, seated himself on the butt of a log, and gazed with a solemn look in his face into the fire.

I did not feel quite like breaking in on his meditations, whatever they might be; and so I stood and looked at him. In a few moments he began: —

“ I ax yer pardin’ ef it be axin’ too much of ye, but I’ve fetched my boat through fifty miles to-day, and it’s nigh on twenty hours sence I’ve tasted food: not but that I could have had enough — fur I run agin a buck on Salmon Lake this arternoon jest as the sun was goin’ down, that was big enough to keep a Dutch parson in venison for a week, and that sizes him pritty big, as ye know, ef ye ever camped with one of ’em ” — and the old man opened his mouth and laughed a peculiar, good-natured laugh, that showed more on the face than it gave forth noise — “ but I was in a hurry to git through here and couldn’t stop to dry him, and I never settle lead into any creetur’ I can’t use fur meat, onless it be a fur bearin’ animil or a wicked panther. So I jest paddled up to him ontill I could flirt some water on to his shoulders, and I landed about two quarts on his back, and the way the creetur’ jumped sot my eyes swimmin’.” And here the old man laughed again in his own peculiar fashion. “ But, as I was sayin’, I haven’t

tasted food sence the last day dawn, and feel sort of empty like; and somehow latterly the night mists seem to git into me more'n they used to when I was younger, fur age thins the blood, and cools it, too, fur that matter; and ef ye feel like botherin' yerself that much ye may steep me a pot of tea and give me a cold cake, ef one be lyin' round; and ef ye happen to have a bit of buck ye fear won't keep till mornin' I guess I could keep it fur ye in a spot where I've put a good deal of that kind of meat in the last sixty year;" and the old man laughed again, in his hearty, noiseless manner, as if greatly pleased at his own homely and innocent wit.

"Old man," said I, "you just sit on that log a few minutes, and I'll give you a drink of tea that will warm your blood as if forty years had been taken from your record; and as for cold cakes, I don't keep that article, but here is some batter" — and I uncovered a pan standing a little back from the fire — "that will make cakes so light that you will have to hold them down with your fork; and look at that" — and I swung out of my birch-bark cupboard a roll of tenderloin steak twelve or fourteen inches long — "I'll spit that for you so that it will dissolve in

your mouth, and go down your throat like honey; and you and I will have a feast that will make us feel as full as a doe in the lily-pads,—for I know whom I have for my guest to-night as well as if you had told me your name, and right glad am I to have the best shot that ever drew bead, and the best boatman that ever feathered a paddle, and as honest a man as ever drew breath, in my camp, and there's my hand, and you are welcome to all I have in my pack, and to all I can do for you, John Norton,"—and I stretched my hand out to the old man, who met its palm with his own in a hearty hunter-like grip.

"Well, well," he exclaimed, as he reseated himself on the log, while I bestirred myself with preparations for the meal, "I sorter suspicioned that ye knowed who I was, but I didn't know fur sartin; fur ye carry a mighty steady face, and ye didn't let on with yer eyes what ye was thinkin' about, as most youngsters do; but I take yer welcome in the same way ye give it, and ef old John Norton can do anything to make yer stay in the woods more pleasant-like to ye, or larn ye any trick of beast or bird, or tell ye anything of natur's ways that ye haven't larnt as yit

—ye may depend on it, young man, that he will larn it to ye; ” — and so saying he relapsed into silence, but watched me steadily as I kept on with my work.

In a few minutes the bark which served for a table was put in front of him, with the plates and cups, the pepper, salt, sugar, and such other luxuries as my pack afforded, and I poured him a cup of the best that ever came from Formosa, while I kept on turning the cakes and the steak.

“ Well, now, that’s the best tea I ever tasted, for sartin,” said the old man, as he sipped the stimulating beverage — “ it’s as smooth as spring water, and goes down a man’s throat as easy as an otter goes into a crick. I never tasted drink that the Lord hadn’t made, for sixty year of my life, but latterly, ’specially at night, or when over-tired, it does seem to me that a few leaves of tea, jediciously steeped as ye have done it, sort of strengthens the water and makes a kind of improvement on the Lord’s own work, ef it be right for a mortal to say so; leastwise,” he added, as he took a deeper quaff, “ this is mighty pleasant warmin’ to the ribs, and sort of makes a man feel inhabited-like inside, and not empty as a shanty with nobody in it; ” and the look of placid

contentment that came to his face was a picture to see.

By this time the meal was ready, and we sat down on either side of the bark table, in the glow of the fire-light, to eat.

“ Henry,” said the old man, as he drew his hunting knife through the tenderloin roll, and marked the ruddy juices that oozed out, and the puff of odorous steam which ascended as the blade clove it, “ this meat is cooked hunter-like, and sort of encourages the teeth to git into the center of it. I have often noted that cookin’ was a kind of gift, and couldn’t be larnt out of books no more than holdin’ a rifle or featherin’ a paddle properly can be larnt in the settlements. The Lord gives one man one set of gifts and another another, and cookin’ and huntin’ are things of natur,’ and not of readin’, and they don’t often go all of them to one man, although in yer case, Henry, the Lord has been very marciful and gracious-like in His treatment of ye,—for I have heerd ye are a great scholar, and love the knowledge that the schools give; and I have many things I want to ax ye of — things I have heerd, but that seem onreasonable to me; but, depend on it, Henry, the best gift the Lord has gin ye

is yer love of natur' and the things that go with it — a keen eye, a quick finger, a strong back, and a conscience that can meet Him in the solitude of these waters and hills and not be afeared; for a wicked man can't bear the presence of the Maker of these solitudes, as I have good reason to know"—and here the old man paused a moment and gazed steadily into the fire—"yis," he resumed, "it is wonderful that He should have gin ye the love of books and of natur' both, but I dare to say, He has His favorites, as I have often noted mothers have among their children, and I can see jest how it may be with Him; but how He came to give ye the gift of cookin' with all the other ones is wonderful, and I can't understand it, but"—

A long, loud cry, beginning with a thin whine and swelling up into a terrific yell, arose into the still air, from the other side of the lake, held possession of the atmosphere for a full minute, then died away in successive echoes, leaving the stillness deeper than before the terrible sound disturbed it breaking suddenly in upon the old man's speech. For a full minute he sat motionless, with his fork half way between the plate and his mouth, and his mouth half opened to re-

ceive it, and not till the last mimic imitation of the frightful scream had died away along the hills that bordered the head of the lake, did a muscle of his figure move.

“Yis, I know the varmint, and an ugly one he is, too. I heerd him in the balsam thickets as I come down the inlet, and he trailed me for a full mile, as they will when hungry; but the creetur’ was too cowardly to show himself in the ma’sh where the moon would tech him, fur a panther has a keen nose fur the smell of powder, and he scented the muzzle of my rifle and knowed I had a wepon. I hoped he would show himself a minit, or that the swish of the ma’sh grass as he tramped through it would make a line fur me, fur I thought I knowed his whinc, and I said to myself, ef he gives me half a chance I’ll let light into him, and sort of square accounts with the creetur’ that’s been some time standin’ — but he is a cowardly chap and ” —

Again the terrible scream leaped into the air, — this time wild and savagely fierce at the start, and so harsh that it seemed to tear the silence into shreds in very fury; and the last hoarse aspiration of it was so terrible in its wrathful strength that the trees, water, and air seemed to

shrink back and shiver in terror at its injection into the peaceful atmosphere.

“Aye, aye! I know ye,” continued the old man, “and a truer hound than ye murdered fur me eleven year ago, come next month, never nosed a track or guarded a hunter’s camp. Ye can yell till ye are hoarse, but ef the Lord spares me, and my eyes don’t git dim fur another month, I’ll look ye up some day and give ye the contents of a grooved bårrel that carries a half-ounce bullit, and chambers eighty grains of powder, and ye shall larn the difference between a hunter used to the sights and a poor hound that has nothin’ but his teeth and his courage to fight ye with. I guess,” continued the old man, as he rose to his feet, “I had better bring up my pack and my rifle, fur I noted by the direction the echoes took that the brute yender is trailin’ down the lake, and he may cross the outlet at the foot and scout up this side, fur his cry shows he is hungry, and he has seen our fire and may think that he can play his capers on us; but he will find the two liveliest morsels he ever tried to put his teeth into, the varmint!” and laughing to himself at his own thought he started for the beach.

“Henry,” said he, as he stood leaning over

the end of his boat, "come here and we will hist this boat into camp. I dare say I am foolish, but somehow I sorter feel that this lake shore isn't quite the spot to leave an honest man's boat on. I can remember when to have done it would have cost a man his boat and scalp, too, onless the Lord marcifully kept his eyes open by dreams."

In a moment the boat was placed where the old man wished it, and setting his back against its side for a support, he unlaced his moccasins, and thrust his smoking feet out toward the fire. Taking a pipe from my pocket, I filled it with a choice brand of tobacco I had in my pouch, and proffered it to him.

"Thank ye, thank ye, Henry," said he, as he made a motion of rejection of the offer with his hand, "I thank ye for the kindness ye mean in yer heart, but ef it be all the same to ye I won't take it. I know it is a comfort to ye, and I am glad to see ye enjoy it, but I have never used the weed; not for the reason that I had a conscience in the matter, but because the Lord gave me a nose like a hound's, and better too, I dare say, for I doubt if a hound knows the sweetness of things, or can take pleasure from the scent that goes into his nostrils. But He has been more

marciful to man — as it was proper He should be — and gin him the power to know good and evil in the air; and smellin' has always been one of my gifts, and I couldn't make ye understand, I dare say, the pleasure I've had in the right exercise of it. Fur ye know that natur' is no more bright to the eye than it is sweet to the nose; and I've never found a root or shrub or leaf that hadn't its own scent. Even the dry moss on the rocks, dead and juiceless as it seems, has a smell to it, and as for the 'arth I love to put my nose into the fresh sile, as a city woman loves the nozzle of her smellin'-bottle. Many and many a time when alone here in the woods have I taken my boat and gone up into the inlet when the wild roses was in blossom, or down into some bay where the white lily cups was all open, and sot in my boat and smelt them by the hour, and wondered if heaven smelt so. Yis, I have been sartinly gifted in my nose, for I've always noted that I smelt things that the men and women I was guidin' didn't, and found things in the air that they never suspicioned of, and I feared that smokin' might take away my gift, and that if I got the strong smell of tobacco in my nose once I should never scent any other smell that was

lesser and finer than it. So I have never used the weed, bein' sort of naterally afeerd of it; but what is medicine for one man may be pisen fur another, as I have noted in animils, for the bark that fattens the beaver will kill the rat; and so ye must take no offense at what I've said, but smoke as much as ye feel moved to, and I will scent the edges of the smell as it comes over my side of the fire, and so we'll sort of jine works — as they say in the settlements — ye do the smokin' and I'll do the smellin', and I think I've got the lightest eend of the stick at that." And the old man laughed in every line of his time-wrinkled face, at the smartness of his saying.

CHAPTER VI.

THE OLD TRAPPER'S AMBUSH.

SO we sat on either side of the fire, filled with that contentment which pervades the mind when the body has eaten its fill of hearty food, and the process of digestion is going forward under the conditions of perfect health and agreeable surroundings. For several minutes we sat in silence, too physically happy on my part to think; and the Old Trapper seemed to have undergone a change of mood, for the play of humor had left his features, and his countenance had settled into a solemn repose.

“I was thinkin’,” he said at length,—“I was thinkin’ of things that happened here long years ago, when I fust come through this lake. I can tell ye, Henry, strange doin’s have been done here, and my thoughts have been on the back trail for several days now, and I had a feelin’ come to me that I orter visit this lake, and sorter see how things looked; fur there’s a grave over there on the p’int, that I made with my own hands, and I buried the body of a man in it that

had no mourner at his funeral, onless me and the hound there might be counted as sech. And I thought I would come through here and see ef the grave wanted mendin', although I dare say it lies quiet enough, and ondistarbed, fur I built it up in good shape, and sodded it over as the man gave me word to do; — not that he ordered it, but because I knowed it was his wish, fur he said the day he died: 'I wish when I am gone my grave might be sodded as they sod them down on the coast where I was born.' And I said to him, 'Don't worry on that score, for I will make it as ye tell me, so far as me and the hound can do it;' and then he told me how he wanted it done, and I will say he talked rational-like from the way he looked at it, and I did it jest as he told me, as the hound there would bear witness ef he could speak; and somehow, latterly, I got the feelin' into me that I orter come through here, and sort of see to it, and that's the reason that I am here, although sence meetin' you I have wondered ef I warn't brought here to meet the livin' and not the dead; fur the Lord don't always tell what He starts us on a journey fur, or what we are to find at the other eend of it, fur the tarmination of things is marci-

fully hidden from the beginnin', and the two ends of a trail never look alike."

While the Old Trapper had been thus moralizing, he had risen to his feet, and turning round with his back to the fire he stretched a hand out toward the lake, saying:—

"It is not often, Henry, that ye see so bright a moon as that, even here in the woods, where the air is as pure as the Lord can make it; and it calls up memories. It is eleven year this very night that me and the hound slept here, and a solemn night it was, too, fur the man had died at sunset, and his body lay right there where the moon whitens the 'arth by that dead root.—*God of heaven, Henry, what was that?*"

The old man's startled ejaculation brought me to my feet as if the panther were on me, and glancing at the spot he had indicated by his looks and gesture, as the exclamation tore out of his mouth, I beheld only the scattered portions of the KEG. Not knowing what to make of the old man's excited action, I said:—

"That? that is only a keg I picked up in the lake this evening."

For a full minute the Old Trapper stood gazing steadfastly at it, and then he stepped to the spot

where the remnants of the keg lay, and picking up a stave he contemplated it a minute or two in grave and solemn silence, and then returning to the fire he re-seated himself on the log, and, still holding the piece of wood in his hand, said :—

“The ways of the Lord are mysterious, and His orderin’s past findin’ out; and some of His creetur’s are born fur good and some fur evil, and how He ontangles the strands in the eend is beyend our knowin’. But perhaps in the long run, He brings the wrong to the right, and so makes the evil in the world to praise Him. Ah me! ah me! what a load the man carried while off the trail, like a blind moose walkin’ in a circle; but before he tired I reckon he struck the blazed line that led him to the Great Clearin’. Least-wise, it looked so.” And the old man paused, gazing fixedly at the bit of the keg that he held in his hand. In a moment he resumed: “I have a mind, Henry, to tell ye the story of the man who owned that keg once, as far as I know it; and onless ye feel sleepy-like I will tell ye what happened here years ago and what I know of the man whose body lies buried there on yender p’int — fur a strange tale it is, and a true one, and the teachin’s of it is solemn.”

I was thoroughly awake by this time, and urged the old man to proceed. After a moment's silence, he began:—

“ Well, it's now eleven year ago, that I was drawin' a trail through the woods from east to west, and I did a good deal of my boatin' in the night, for the moon was full, and I always had a sort of hankerin' for the night work ever sence I've slept on the boughs; for Natur' looks one way in the daytime, and another way in the nighttime, and no one knows how sweet she can be to the nose, and how pleasant to the ears, and how han'some to the eyes, onless he has seed her face, and heerd her voices, and smelt her sweet smells, in the night season. I've always noted that those who knowed Natur' only by daylight, knowed only half her ways, and less than half, too, for that matter. Fur in the evenin' she gits familiar and confidential-like with one, and talks to him of herself and her ways as she never does in the daytime. Fur Natur' has a great many secrets, and she's timid as a young faan, and ye've got to creep into thickets, and lay yer boat up under the banks of streams, and lie down in the ma'sh grass when all is dark and still, ef ye want to hear her whisper to ye of her in-

nermost feelin's. The Lord only knows how many times I have ambushed her in her hidin' places as a Huron would a camp, and caught her at her pranks. Ah, Henry, ye have no idee how many things I have larnt of her in the night-time, or how frisky and solemn, both, Natur' can be betwixt the settin' and risin' of the sun.

“ Well, as I was sayin', I'd been over to the east boundaries of the woods, nigh on to the Horicon waters, where I did a good deal of my 'arly scoutin', to sorter see how the brooks and woodways looked agin, but it was a sorry time I had of it, fur the settlers had pushed in, and their mills was on every stream, and their painted housen stood under the very trees where I used to cook my venison with no sights or sounds around save those that Natur' herself made. And ye can well believe, Henry, that I was glad to git away from what I went to see and be back here where my ears couldn't hear the sound of axes and the fallin' of trees — yis, I was mighty glad to git back where things was quiet and peaceful-like, and the cruelties and devilmements of men that have no respect fur things the Lord has made hadn't come to distarb the habits of Natur'.

“ Well, as I was sayin', it was eleven year

back, and in this very month, and well on in the night, that I came down the inlet yender into this lake. And the moon was nigh on to her full, and everythin' looked solemn and white jest as they do to us now, and the Lord knows I leetle thought to meet mortal man in these solitudes when I run agin what I am to tell y'e of.

“I was paddlin' down this side of the lake, keepin' well under the shore, list'nin' and thinkin', and happy in my heart as a rat in the water, when I heerd the strangest sounds I ever heerd come out of bird or beast. It was a kind of murmurin' noise that run out into the stillness and sorter capered round a minit, and then run back where it started from. Ye better believe, Henry, I sot and listened as a man listens scoutin' alone in the nighttime in these woods, when he gits a sound in his ears that he can't make out. Yis, I sot and listened until I was nothin' but ears, and the very stillness beat on the narves of my head as I have heerd the roll of the waves on the lakes beat on the beach. But for the life of me I couldn't make it sound nateral, nor tell what animil it belonged to, and it took the conceit out o' me to larn that there was a creetur in the woods whose mouth didn't tell me its name and habits.

“Arter a while I got the true direction of it, fur a sound goes as straight from its startin’ to the ear as a bee from a wind-fall or barnt clearin’ goes to its hole in the beech, and I said to myself as I lifted my rifle to my knee, that I would ambush the creetur and find out what mouth had a language in it that old John Norton couldn’t tell the meanin’ of. So I laid my boat up in the direction of the sound as if my life depended on the proper use of the paddle. I hadn’t gone more than ten rods afore the noise stopped, but I’d fixed it in the line of a dead Norway and I knowed I could put my boat inside of fifty feet of where the creetur lay. I never acted more sarcumspectly nor fetched an ambushment more easy and sartin, and in a shorter time than it takes me to tell ye I had my boat under the p’int of that bank there within ten feet of the shrubs, with my finger on the trigger of a rifle that goes easy in an onsartin ambushment. There I sot a full minit knowin’ I was inside of fifty feet of the creetur, with my eyes and ears as open as they should be in such sarcumstances. Then I heerd a kind of crawlin’ sound as ef the brute or reptile was trailin’ himself along the sand; and I knowed if the wiggle of a bush would give me the line I

could open a hole through him. It might have been ten feet that the creetur crawled and then he stopped, but I had fixed him well in mind and felt sartin I could drive the lead where it ought to go. I had got the breech of my rifle half way to my face, and my cheek was settlin' to the stock, when the creetur opened his mouth, and by the Lord of marcy, Henry, *I diskivered I had ambushed no animil at all, but a mortal man!*"

Long before the Old Trapper had got to this point of his narrative I had become profoundly interested in his recital. For he told the story as men born to the woods tell their tales of personal adventure — with a natural eloquence of tone, feature, and gesture which only those have whose experiences have been narrow but intense, and who speak from the simple earnestness of untutored and therefore unfettered power. His narrative had been told from the beginning in two languages, one verbal and the other pantomimic, and he had carried me along with his story as it advanced as much by that which addressed the eye as by that which entered the ear. He had gathered warmth and energy of expression as he had gone on, until I found myself moving in sympathy with the visible action of his features,

body, and hands; and when he reached the climax of his discovery, I shared to the full in the excitement of his pantomimic action, and doubt if the shock of surprise which he had experienced eleven years before in his boat under the bank, on the point which lay in the moonlight full in view, was much greater at the startling discovery he had made, than was mine. So we sat looking full at each other across the camp-fire, our faces tense with mutual excitement, as if we were actual sharers in the astonishing discovery.

“Yis, Henry, a *man* was there, a man on that p'int where I expected to find only an animil; and his words, as they came out of his mouth into the still air of the night, strong and clear as a man in the rapids callin' for help, were words of prayer. I've been, Henry, in many ambushments in the seventy year I've lived, and I've been in peril from inimies behind and afore; and more than once have I met the rage of man and beast and been brought face to face with death onexpectedly; but never since my eyes knowed the sights, or my life depended on the proper use of my faculties, was I ever so taken onawares or onbalanced as I was under the bushes, there on yender p'int, eleven year ago, when I heerd the

voice of the man I had mistook for an animil, break out in prayer. It was of the Lord's own marcy, Henry, that I was not a murderer of my kind, for my finger was on the trigger as I told ye, and my eye was gittin' on to as trusty a barrel as man ever hefted, when He opened the creetur's mouth with the sound of His own name. For a minute the blood stopped in my heart, and my hair moved in my scalp; and then I shook like a man with the chills, ontill I drew from the guard of my rifle a finger that had never quivered afore, for fear I should explode the piece and distarb the man in his worship.

“ I sot and heerd the man from beginnin' to eend and I larned, under the bushes that night, how hard-put a mortal may be by reason of his sin. Fur the man prayed fur help as one calls to a comrade when his boat has gone down under him in the rapids, and he knows he must have help or die. I've been a prayin' man, Henry, as one should be who lives here in the woods where the Sperit of the Lord is everywhere and in all things; but I never prayed as that man prayed, and it larned me that what is prayin' to one man isn't prayin' to another, for the natur' of our wants settle the natur' of our prayin', and

the habits of our life makes the trail to His marcy level or steep. And this man was climbin' a steep trail, and his soul was strugglin' on a hard carry, I tell ye; and the words of his cry came out of his mouth like the words of one who is lost onless somebody saves him. It's dreadful fur a man to live in sech a way that he has to pray in that fashion; fur we orter live, Henry, so that it is cheerful-like to meet the Lord, and pleasant to hold converse with Him.

“So I sot in my boat ontill he was done, and then I hugged myself close in under the bushes, fur I heerd him comin' down toward the shore, and I knowed he must pass nigh where I lay in the ambushment. And he did,—aye, so nigh that I could have teched him with my paddle, and he had somethin' heavy in his arms, fur he staggered as he went by, as ef put to it fur strength. In a minit I heerd him shove a boat out of the bushes on to the water, and, gittin' in, he pushed off on to the lake. He led straight off into the center of it, and I trailed him in his wake, fur the moon had got back of the mountain here to the right, and I was detarmined to see what his queergoin's-on meant. Well, when he had come nigh to the middle of the lake, he

laid his paddle down, and lifted somethin' into the air, and turned it up endwise and poured what was in it out. I larnt, arterwards, what it it was he lifted into the air, and what it was he poured out of it, for he told me with his own lips, and under sech sarcumstances, and at a time, when mortals are apt to tell the truth; fur he told me on his death-day, when he lay dyin', and I never knowed a man, white or redskin, that didn't talk straight as an honest trapper countin' his pelts, when he had come to the last blaze on the trail, and his feet stood on the edge of the Great Clearin'."

CHAPTER VII.

FINDING THE MISER.

“WELL, I didn’t make myself known to him that night, fur I felt onsartin as to the natur’ of the man; and beside, I conceited I had no right to step in suddenly upon a man in the midst of his troubles, of whatever sort they might be; — fur it always seemed to me that a mortal had a right to have ownership of his own grief, and to shet the door of it agin the whole world, as much as a hunter in his own camp has a right to shet the door of his lodge. So I shied off farther into the lake and made camp fur the night, or what there was left of it, on the island yender.

“Well, in the mornin’ I bestirred myself, and started my fire ostentatious-like on the side of the island next the p’int, and it made as much smoke as ef it had been built by a boy from the settlements, or a college lad on his first trip to the woods, whose tongue runs to words, and whose fires are all smoke,—fur I wanted to call his eyes over my way and let him know that there was a human on the lake, and one that

didn't seek concealment like a thievin' half-breed on an honest trapper's line; fur a fire here in the woods is like the little keerds that the gals in the settlements, I have been told, send round to their friends to ax them to drink tea with them, or jine in a jig: a ginerál invite to come in and feel at home. So I piled on the timber in a wasteful way, and dropped on a bit of punk now and then, ontíl, 'twixt the blaze and the smoke, I warrant a hunter's eye, even in peace time, not to say a scout's when the redskins be loose, could have seen it ten mile away. But the man on the p'int never took the hint, and well enough he mightn't, fur I arterwards larned that he never saw either blaze or smoke, for he was lyin' in his lodge back there in the swale, with his thoughts far away, and his eyes on other lights than such as the hands of man build.

“Well, I cooked my breakfast for the hound there and me, and while we were eatin' it we both kept thinkin' of the man on the p'int; fur a dog of breedin' knows what his master's thinkin' about, and I could tell by the movements of the hound's nose that the Lord was blowin' knowledge to him from the other side of the lake, and that his thoughts were not on the meat he was

eatin', but over there where him and me had fetched our ambushment the night before. So arter we had finished eatin', and cleaned things up, we stood around awhile and kept our eyes on the p'int fur some friendly sign, and both me and the hound felt sort of disapp'inted-like, and the least bit oneasy in mind as to what it all meant; fur it seemed mighty queer that the man should make no sign, not to say show himself, when he must have knowed that we wanted to be neighborly. So arter a while I put off toward the p'int, detarmined to see fur ourselves what sort of a creetur' he was whose behavior had been so mighty onusual the night afore. And I paddled over straight fur the bushes where I knowed his boat was, and, sure enough, there it was plain in sight, where I felt it must be.

“Then I went ashore and began to poke around, and the trail was plain enough for a man from the settlements to follow with his eyes half shet; fur it led from the boat straight up the hill, under the pines and down into the swale back of it. So I pushed along, keeping an eye open for the shanty that I knowed must be nigh, and soon sot my eyes on it, sure enough; but it was no shanty at all, only a mis'able old tent. I will

confess, Henry, that it rather sot me agin the man, whoever he was, when I saw him livin' shet up in an onventilated canvas bag, like a rat in his hole in the spring freshets, when he might have housed himself in a bark lodge, dry and airy, with one side open as a house always should be, arter my way of thinkin'; for it's a great blessin' to be able to see the bigness of the world in which ye are livin', and breathe the air as the Lord blows it to ye fresh and strong from the slope of mountains and the cool water level. And I conceit that whoever lives in a canvas shed, that's damp and swashy as last year's ma'sh-grass, must be a very senseless or wicked bein', who don't know how han'some the world is, or else wants to hide himself from the eyes of man, and of the Lord, too, for that matter; for an honest man in the woods builds his lodge so he can see and be seed by day and by night, because he loves the sun and sky by day and the stars by night, and has no reason to hide himself or his traps from the Lord, or from his own kind,— which is open and noble-like, as I understand it. So when I seed the mis'erable and nasty old tent, where the bark was plenty and willin' to be peeled, I felt suspicious of the man, and conceited that his morals

wasn't what they should be. But in spite of my suspicionin' I detarmined to go on and nose the man out; and I said to myself: 'What right have ye, old John Norton, to set in jedgment on a fellow mortal, and before even ye have seed him? It may be the man is ignorant of the ways of the woods, and knows no better nor a babe how to care for himself; or perhaps he has been onfortunit and needs help more than jedgment.'

"So I pushed ahead and laid my hand on the rag of a door and drew it aside in a frank sort of a way, and, by the Lord, Henry, the man lay dead before me! Leastwise I thought he was dead, fur his eyes was half shet and half open, as a dead man's should be who had died onatended, and his face was as white as the moss on the rock when the moonshine is on it. Well, Henry, it was a solemn sight, I can tell ye, and one that made me ashamed of my suspicionin' of the man, and I trust the Lord forgave me the wicked thought I had had of a fellow mortal because he hadn't showed himself on the p'int, or called on me at my camp, when all the time the hand of death was heavy on him, and his legs were as strengthless as the reeds on the ma'sh when the frost has smitten 'em.

“ Well, I stood at the door of the tent and I onkivered my head, as a mortal should in sech solemn sarcumstances, fur I verily thought the man was dead; but the hound, there, knowed better, fur the Lord has gin a sense in sech things to a dog that He withholds from the master, fur the hound, arter standin’ respectful-like behind me a minit, as ef he would not be too forrud, or shame me by his better knowledge, pushed in to the side of the body and put his nose to the cheek and then just turned his eyes up to me and wagged his tail. Ah me! it’s wonderful what larnin’ the Lord has gin to the creeturs He has made, and how often they know more than their masters; and here was a dog who knowed the livin’ and the dead better than I did, though the body was the body of a mortal, and not of his kind.

“ Well, when I seed the hound move his tail, happy-like, I knowed the man was not dead, however nigh he might be on to it; and so I stepped in quick as powder ever barnt and histed the man up, and took him in my arms, and carried him out of the mis’rable tent into the fresh, cool air, and laid him down in the warm sunshine on the p’int, and fell to chafin’ his legs and his wrists,

and pressin' on his chest, and sprinklin' water in his face; and I blowed in his nostrils, and did as a man should in sech sarcumstances to one of his kind.

“ But he was mighty weak, and all the strength he had was in his eyes, fur he couldn't move hand or foot, more than a buck with a bullit through his spine the mornin' arter he is shot. And it was a very solemn sight to see a full-grown man lyin' on the sand with all natur' lively around him, and he onable to move a leg, or lift a finger; and it showed that the body of a mortal has no more life in it than a last year's beaver's hide, when his sperit has left it; and it was awful-like to see a fellow bein' dead in every member of his mortal frame but his eyes, and all there was of himself lookin' steadily out of them at ye. But I felt he would fetch around arter a while, fur the sun was warm and the wind fresh, and I bolstered him up so it would blow straight into his mouth and nostrils, and I said to myself, ef natur' can't bring him to, nothin' can. And so I felt cheerful-like, and pritty sartin that between the sun and wind and warm sand he would git his members warmed up and agoin' agin afore long; and the hound thought so, too, fur when

the man fust opened his eyes the animil knowed it was a good sign as well as I did, fur the creetur no sooner saw them open naterally, than he scooted a circle round the body in the sand lively as a young pup at play, and then he stopped in his foolishness and let a roar out of his mouth that might have been heerd over to Salmon Lake; and then he came back and sot down on his hanches close by the man, and watched him as 'arnestly as I did. Every few minits he would look up at me with a happy sort of look in his eyes and fetch a wag or two with his tail; and it was mighty cheerful and encouragin' to see the animil act so, and made me feel sort of chirpy myself, as I sot in the sand watchin' the man, fur I knowed the hound was a truthful dog, and was wise in his gifts, and wouldn't lie agin the vardict of 'em, and I conceited that the man would pick up and be able to talk, ef the dog said so.

“ Well, arter a while the man began to pick up fur sartin, fur the blood came back into his skin, and his fingers begun to open and shet easy-like, and he put his tongue out and wet his lips naterally as a man does arter sleep in a hot lodge. I sarched my pack and found some tea a city woman gave me the summer afore fur a sarv-

ice I done her on the Raquette, which was no more than any man would do fur a woman, but which she said she should never forgit till her dyin' day,—and I guess she never will, fur I found somethin' she had lost that lay near her heart, and I never knowed a white woman, or squaw, neither, fur that matter, forgit a man who done them a sarvice in that direction;—well, as I was sayin', I sarched fur the tea the city woman had gin me, and steeped a cup of it fur the man on the sand, and I made it strong as the leaf would make it, fur I knowed it would help natur' to rally, and make him strong enough to take nourishment, and set his tongue goin', ef sech a thing could be by the Lord's app'intmēt.

“ So I gave him the drink, and it took hold on him at once. It was really amazin', Henry, how the yarb put life into him as ef it had the Lord's own power to call the soul back into the mortal frame and set the members of it workin'. Yis, it was a marvel to see the power that natur' had put into a few withered leaves—fur the more he drank the better he felt, and by the time he had come to the bottom of the cup I could see that the man was nigh himself agin, and likely enough to begin to talk; and sure

enough, in a minit he made a effort to speak, and arter one or two trials he got his tongue used to the motions, and said:—

“ ‘Old man, who be ye, that has called me back from the gates of death and summoned me from the borders of the grave?’ ”

“ ‘My name,’ I said, ‘is John Norton, and I be nobody but a hunter and trapper who has done nothin’ but live in a nateral way and sarve his kind when the Lord gave him a chance; and as fur bringin’ ye back from the border of the grave, I think ye was pritty nigh on to it, and me and the hound yender, and the tea I steeped fur ye, did mayhaps give ye a lift in the right direction—though it mustn’t be overlooked, ef ye are curi’us in the matter, that the sun and wind done their part to bring ye to; and I dare say the Lord in His marcy has done more than us all, fur ye sartinly would have died ef He hadn’t gin the hound the sense to know the dead from the livin’ and helped us in our endivers. And now, friend, what may yer name be, and what game did ye have in mind when ye pushed yer trail from the settlements into this lonely lake. Fur I see from the signs, that ye know nothin’ of the woods, and I marvel why a man

of yer ignorance should leave the hants of yer kind, and I dare say kindred, and resk yerself in these out-of-the-way places, which be pleasant to those who know 'em, but resky to them that doesn't; so I ax ye yer name, and why I find ye here alone and onprotected as ef ye hadn't a friend on the 'arth.'

“ ‘John Norton,’ said the man, ‘my name is Roberts, John Roberts; and I have not a friend on the earth, nor do I deserve one, for I have forfeited the love of all that ever loved me, by my evil acts, and the Lord has visited upon me the punishment I deserved by separating me from them. Yea, out of my sins has come judgment, and my evil thought has been the pit into which I have stumbled. But the mercy I had forfeited has been shown me, in my guilt, and the peace of the Spirit that made and lives in the universe has been breathed into me from these mountains and the sky and the majesties of nature in the presence of which, glad that my mortal life is ended, I lie dying;’ and the man turned his eyes on the objects he named, with the look of ‘a hound in ‘em when he meets the pleased face of his master.

“ ‘John Roberts,’ I said, ‘I do not under-

stand ye, for the beauty of natur' is sech as to make men wish to live and not to die, and though I trust I may be willin' to go when He calls, still I can't conceit of any place pleasanter or more cheerful-like for a human bein' to live in than these woods, and I hope He will let me stay here, scoutin' round, as long as His plans techin' me allow of; and, as fur that matter, ef He should forgit us altogether I don't conceit that me and the hound would be very onhappy or feel cheated-like, but would hold it as a kind of a marcy, and keep on enjoyin' ourselves and sarvin' Him in the way of natur's app'intment; and as for friends, I haven't an inimy in the world but a thievin' Huron I caught on the line of my traps, last winter, and shortened his left ear half an inch with a bullit, and a mis'rabile half-breed or two I've larnt the commandments in a similar manner. But outside of these, me and the hound there are in peace with all the 'arth, and feel cheerful and pleasant-like toward every livin' bein', except the panthers,—yis, always exceptin' the panthers, that we keep a kind of runnin' account with, as the peddlers say in the settlements, and square up whenever we git a chance.

“Ye see, Henry,” continued the old man, “I wanted to chirk him up as much as I could, because he was mighty weak still, and I thought that low sperits would sot him back agin, so even the hound and me couldn’t bring him to; and so I talked the least bit frisky-like, and took on as ef I felt^e ondistarbed. But he knowed better all the time; for he looked at me with his eyes fixed solemnly on my face and said:—

“‘Old man, I know you can’t understand, because you have lived an innocent life, and, according to the light you had you have walked in the path of righteousness, and the peace of the upright is in your heart, and the light of it is over all the world, and makes it desirable to your eyes. And I can well understand that you need no other life than the one you lead, or other heaven than the lovely scenes which your gifts and your manner of life have taught you so well to enjoy; and I can understand, too, how you cannot grasp the meaning of guilt as those who sin against light feel it: the guilt of a man who has resisted God and hardened his nature by a cursed passion, and hated what he should have loved, and loved with lusting what he should have hated — for

you have been as a child, and the Kingdom of Heaven has come to you with the years, because your aging took not the simple innocency of childhood from you. But I have lived so that memory is only fuel to remorse, and the earth a constant reminder of my guilt; and hence I would seek my heaven in the *forgetfulness of death, and anticipate another land beyond the grave, in hopes of finding escape from what torments me here, and of having ministered unto my life the boon of a new start. And you must know that there are those in the world beyond the grave whom I have wronged, and the load of their wronging lies heavy on my soul. I would find them, and on my knees ask their pardon; for, old man, even God Himself cannot undo the structure of our minds, nor perform duty for us, and I feel that the forgiveness of Heaven cannot make me happy until I have the forgiveness of my wife whom I deserted, and of my child whom I, with curses, refused to see in her dying hour.

““ And you should know, old man, that I am dying, and I long to die; nor do I ask aught save that I may have strength to tell you my story, and give you a few directions; for it will ease

my soul to talk while dying, and I know it will delight you to hear of the goodness of that God whom you, in simple reverence, worship, and to learn from the lips of a dying sinner that the woods you so love have been to him the means of his salvation. So sit you down, old man, and listen closely, for I am weak, and I will tell you the story of my life;—why I am here, and what you are to do with what is left of me and mine when I am gone from here, as I soon shall be, forever.’

“Well, Henry, I saw that the man was in solemn ’arnest, and I knowed the Lord was apt to give a mortal nigh death a foreknowin’ of the time and order of things techin’ his departur’, and I conceited the man was right in his idees, and that it would be onreasonable to resist him; so I sot down on the sand by his side and said, ‘Well, friend, I allow there’s reason in yer words, and John Norton is not the one to arger agin a dyin’ man nor distarb his thoughts with foolish talkin’. And it may be ye have come nigh the eend of the trail, as ye say, and ef so I sartinly advise ye to onload yerself of whatever bears heavy on ye; fur a man should enter the Great Clearin’ with nothin’ heavier than his rifle about

him, and ready fur whatever sarvice the Lord app'int's. And as to the directions, ye may give me as many as ye have to tell, and ef it be within' range of mortal power it shall all be done as ye tell me; fur I have sot beside many a dyin' man arter the scrimmage was over, and heerd his words, and not one, white or redskin, friend or inimy, can rise in the Jedgment and say John Norton didn't do jest as he was told to do. So do ye go ahead and ease yer mind, John Roberts, and me and the hound will listen, and as we larn yer wishes so will we do, even ef the traps ain't sot on the line next winter, or the trail of yer arrand takes us into the onnateral noise and deviltry of the settlements.'

“ So I promised the man, Henry, and kept my word, as the hound, there, knows, fur he heerd it all and seed it all arterwards, and it was done jest as the man app'inted. And this is what he told me as he lay on the sand, with me and the hound listenin'.”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MISER'S CONFESSION.

“ ‘MY father, John Norton, was a miser, although the world never knew it; but he loved money, and all his life was spent in getting it. He lived to be an old man, and when he died he was buried from the meeting-house—for he was a deacon in the church—and the minister preached the sermon, and told the people of his thrift and economy, of his industry and sobriety, and held him up as an example, when I knew, and all his friends knew, that he was sober when others drank, simply because he was too stingy to drink, and that his industry was all selfish, and that his economy was miserly. I only tell you this to let you know whence I got my love of money, and how the lust of gain came in me. It was born in me, John Norton, as much as the power of scenting was born in your hound; yea, given me at birth from the miserly nature and habits of a father who was a church member, and whose character and mode of life were

praised by the minister when they buried his body.

““He left me all his property, for I was his only child; and no one save me ever knew how much it was, for it was largely in gold coin that he had hidden away, and which he told me of, and where to find it, by whispering it in my ear when he was dying. I was thirty years of age before he died, and the property fell to me; and until I had the gold myself, and had seen it and counted it, I had lived a happy life; for I was married to an angel, and had three children, and a happier family never lived than we were before the gold came to me. But no sooner had I gotten it into my possession than I began to love it. Yea, the sight of the coin started the lust for it in me, and woke to full life the awful appetite for it which was in him and which he had transmitted to me. And the love for that gold grew on me as I handled it; —and handle it I did, until it became a passion with me. I used to get up nights when my wife was sleeping and go down cellar, where I kept it in a large pot, and count it over, and push my hands into it, and laugh to hear it rattle, and to see it shine in the candle light. And the love of it grew

and grew and grew, until I loved nothing else. And with the growth of the dreadful lust in me there grew a suspicion of men and women, because I had got it into my head that they would steal it, until at last I grew suspicious of my own wife and children, even to such a degree that I drove them out of the house and forbade them ever to cross its threshold again. You say I was mad. Yes, I was mad—mad with the awful madness of one in whose heart is a terrible and wicked love; a love that entices him and seduces him from good unto evil, and finally becomes stronger than conscience—stronger than affection for wife and children—yea, stronger than his fear of God. Yes, I was mad in that way, and the madness grew in its fury until it became a continuous frenzy, and my life one hell of raging fear, suspicion, and hatred of my kind. I need not tell you all, for you would not understand it; you could not understand it, for you have never handled money nor known the love of it, and are as a child in your knowledge of such an experience. At last I came to these woods; came driven by the frenzy of fear lest men should steal my money; came, not from the love of nature, or

the longing for a peaceful, quiet, innocent life; but in order to be where my money would be safe, for my money was my God, my life, my heaven, and I feared some one would steal it, and so I brought it here because no man was here. How did I bring it? I brought it in a keg; a keg stout and large, and lined with my own hands; and that keg was my altar, my shrine, my God. John Norton, remember it's a dying man that is talking to you, when I tell you that here, on this very beach where I now lie, and you sit, I have sat in the bright sunlight and in the solemn moonlight, too, and counted my money by the hour, and laughed and danced around it as a devil might; yea, I, a mortal man, have danced around a pile of money like a heathen round his idol, with the great blue sky overhead, and, beyond the sky, the greater God looking solemnly down with His all-seeing eyes upon me and my gold.'

“And here the man paused, Henry, a minit, and he panted like a young faan in her fust race with the hounds, fur he was overtaskin' his strength, and I feared he would die fur sartin ef he didn't fetch up a bit and git rested; so I thought I had better give him a lift in the right direction by

talkin' a leetle myself, and I drawed at a ventur', like a man who sends the lead by his notions of the sound, when it's too dusky to git his eye into the sights, and said:—

“ ‘Ef I was in your place, Mr. Roberts, I would set down and rest a bit, fur ye be travelin' with a big load over a rough carry, ef I am any judge, and ye be gittin' sort of shaky-like in yer legs, and ye will come down in a heap pritty soon ef ye don't steady up a bit and take it a leetle easier; fur me and the hound mean to fetch ye round yit, that is, ef the tea don't gin out, and the Lord's app'intments be not agin it. So ye jest hold up a minit or two, and rest while we stir in a few more leaves of the yarb, and steep it fur ye easy-like, fur tea can't be hurried no more than a slow hound in the beginnin' of a race, before he's got the scent warm in his nose, and his faculties workin'. No, the yarb is spunky and knows its own importance, and won't stand rough treatment; and ef ye bile it a bit, its vartu' is gone, fur a wallopin' pot spiles the tea; so ye give me and the hound time to do the thing up accordin' to the rules and practices of correct obsarvation, and we will give ye a lift that'll make ye grateful to us both.

“I don’t catch the pith of yer last sayin’ about the eyes of the Lord bein’ terrible as He was lookin’ at ye; and I can’t conceit of it, nohow. Now, the eyes of a panther be terrible, sure enough, and I have lined the sights by them when they barnt a hole in the darkness; and I have had many a clinch with a Huron in a scrimmage, when I was younger, when the blood of his savagery was up, and his eyes was as red as an adder’s; but the eyes of the Lord, as I have seed them in the works of His hand, have always been strong, fur sartin, but gentle and mild as a mother doe when her faan is friskin’ around her; and I can’t conceit of the face of the Lord as bein’ terrible, nor understand how a mortal could be afeerd to have them on him.’

“And all the while, Henry, I kept kindlin’ the fire fur the tea. But the man broke in on me, and said:—

“ ‘Old man, leave off preparing that tea and hear me; for naught that you can do will prevent my dying, for it is written that I die this day, and I feel within my soul that my hour is drawing nigh. Leave off your preparations, therefore, for your efforts cannot save me from death, nor would I have it otherwise if I could.

I want you to listen and 'hear my words, nor move again until I am done.'

"So I sot down agin, and the hound came and sot down on the other side of the man, and then he began to talk:—

" ' John Norton, I came to these woods a miserable miser. There was in all my life but one love, and that was for money. Money I loved, loved it with all the strength of my nature. For years I had thought of nothing else, and cared for nothing else. For years I had no joy but the fierce joy of seeing it and counting it. To me my money was all there was in the whole universe worth loving,—the one idol of my soul. Well, I brought it here because no man was here, and hence knew it could not be stolen. With it safe, I was happy. With it secure, I asked no higher boon. I was not only a miser, but I was hardened in all my nature. The lust of gold had eaten out all other cravings. All noble affections, all tender sympathies, all truthful qualities, all charities and fine emotions had been, by this all-absorbing passion, banished from my bosom. I was only a shell of a man inhabited by one great devil. This devil in me had his fierce joy, his tormenting suspicions, his rending

rage, his agonies, and his pangs; but no trace of humanity, no fiber of charity, no possibility of peace. Thus possessed, I came to this lake. You must not think I had not been entreated; for man and woman had alike been faithful to me, and with prayers, with tears, with warnings and exhortations had they striven to deliver me from the devil within, and bring me to my right mind. But neither man nor woman, neither wife nor child, nor the Spirit of God acting in and through these could make me see the sinfulness of my sin, nor the emptiness of my passion, nor the vanity of my life. These I could resist and had resisted. Man could not master the devil in me nor drive him out of my soul.

“ ‘ But here the demon was met by other agents and agencies he could not resist, and here the devil in me was mastered. By whom and what? By Nature, I reply, and by the irresistible majesties of God in Nature. Here the greatness of my surroundings made me small, and the immeasurable splendors above me at night, and the glories around me by day, made my gold seem contemptible. Not that these influences came to be felt at once; not that the conviction produced by them was sudden, for it was not; but slowly,

subtly, and in a way I could not fight; with a power I could not resist, out of the silence of space, out of the blue sky and the uplifted mountains, out of sunrise and sunset, out of the water and the air, out of the solemn nights and the succession of splendid days, there came regeneration to my soul. Within me was born in this mystical way a sense of larger and holier things, and moods of worship, and generous thoughts, and longings for what was fine and far ahead; so that, involuntarily, and before I was aware, a change came to me in my likes and feelings, and I beheld as with eyes newly opened the significance of things, the use of life and the true application of its lessons. I said that my eyes were opened; and they were, so that I who had never thought of the beyond and the coming, but had lived in the here and the now, was compelled by a force within me to look constantly up and ahead into the great unseen and unknown. And this force within me I could not resist. It was stronger than my will and mightier than habit, and, forced by its energy, I yielded. And then, out of the unknown and the unseen, there came forth, as the blaze of a beacon from darkness and distance, a vision, and it scared me at first to face

it, but at last I was able; and the vision that blazed out upon me from the darkness and the distance, terrible in its brightness, was the *Idea of Immortality*.

“ ‘ John Norton, this idea haunted me. The idea of life beyond, stretching on forever and forever, unintermittent and endless, lay like a mountain on my guilty soul. And out of the conception came interrogations that searched me through and through like a knife. And out of this searching, amid agony and pangs, was born a Conscience: a Conscience which pinched me like a vise, and wrung groans and cries of remorse out of my mouth, until, at times, the silence of the night was filled with my moaning. It was the silence that did it, old man; for the silence was more than silence: it was GOD. I could not fly from it; I could not escape its rebukes; I could not hide myself from its solemn upbraidings. It condemned me for the life I had lived; it upbraided me for the passion I had nursed; it threatened me with the censure of a just and holy verdict. Here, on this point, in the midst of the all-surrounding silence, I found my Judgment Day. Here my mind lost the petty measurement of time, and took to itself

in perfect sensing the realization of eternity. Here I wrestled with the Spirit that has not form, and strove with the energy that can never be incarnate: the Spirit of Justice and Love commingling with the energy of God. Here, old man, I strove; here I was overcome; and here I yielded; aye, yielded to a test. And the test was this: that I should deliberately, with my own hands, empty into the waters of this lake the gold I had loved like a devil; and to keep which, without fear of losing it, I had been self-banished from my kindred and kind and had come to this lonely lake. Yes, I yielded; yielded to the power I could not resist; the power of the Lord who made and inhabits these woods, and whose presence I saw and felt in their beauty, and majesty, and silence. And I cried unto Him to whom I had yielded, for strength to do the test; cried unto Him on my knees, with my hands on the keg that held the gold, for strength to deliver my soul from its horrible spell, and pour it—yea, every dollar of it,—into the waters of the lake. And He gave me strength, old man,—even in answer to my prayer did He strengthen me to do the deed, which, being done, delivered me from the spell of the power that had held me,

and from the bondage to the terrible lust. And last night the battle was fought, and the victory won, and I was delivered from Hell. For I prayed unto Him, and He listened and heard; and I lifted the keg and carried it to my boat, and paddled to the middle of the lake. And there, with hell and heaven to see, I lifted the keg in my arms and held it out over the water, and poured the gold I had worshiped into its depths. And there and then, when the deed was done, the blessing of the Lord came on me, and His marvelous peace stole into my soul. It came to me from the air, and the water, and the sky; from the bosom of the white moon-lighted stillness; from the motionless woods and the shores; came to me from the nigh and the far; from the air around me and the infinite spaces above and beyond; came to me, Old Trapper, from the outbreathings of that God who is Spirit, and in whom the innocent and the forgiven live, and move, and have being.'

"Here the man came to a halt, Henry, and he looked into my eyes as if he wanted to see if I understood, and arter a minit or two he said:—

" 'Old man, do you understand me?'

" 'Well,' said I to him, 'I can't say that the

trail of your talk is altogether plain to me, Mr. Roberts, but me and the hound has kept our eyes on ye as ye blazed along on the line, and I guess we have got the ginerall direction of it. I can see fur sartin that ye had a rough trip, and a heavy pack to carry, and ye must have found it hard backin' at times. It seems to me ef ye had onloaded 'arlier ye would have fetched through in better shape and saved val'able time, fur ye look to me like a man who hasn't got over the carry till dusk, and can't be of much sarvice to the camp till another sunrise; but I think ye have got across fur sartin and are out of the woods, and that's a good deal to say of a man who has been lost and fooled away half his day by walkin' in circles, and I rej'ice that ye are where ye are, and know which way the trail leads arter this, and ef ye be sartin of the lay of the land ahead and know where the line ye be on leads to, ye orter feel contented and happy-like, as I dare say ye do, Mr. Roberts.'

“ ‘ Yes, I do feel contented and happy,’ said he, ‘ happier than words may tell. My sin has been great, but the mercy of God is greater, and I feel I can trust Him here and beyond. I have lived as no man should live, but here, on this

beach to-day, my life will end, and when I am gone you may think of me as a sinner whose sin was forgiven and whose soul had found peace.'

"Arter this he didn't say much fur some time but lay with his eyes lookin' up to the sky and a quiet sort of a look on his face. I conceited the man was thinkin' of things, and it may be of people, a good ways off, and that it wouldn't be right to distarb him in his meditations. But arter a while I said to him, fur I felt a little oneasy on the 'subject, and I feared he would forgit it,— ' Mr. Roberts, ye spoke about some directions ye wanted to give me, and perhaps ye had better say what ye have in mind on the matter, so me and the hound may know jest what ye want done by and by; fur we shall mind and do jest as ye tell us, ef it be within the range of our gifts, and death don't overtake us on the arrand.'

"Well, arter a little while he turned his eyes on me and said:—

" ' I suppose it don't make much difference where or how my body is buried, after I am gone; do you, Old Trapper? ' "

" ' Well, no, I don't think it does, Mr. Roberts, when ye git right down to the gist of the matter;

but every creetur' is born with his prejudices, and has his own idees of what is right and proper techin' things to be done; and I conceit the Lord allows a man to fetch his line about where he pleases in p'int of parsonal judgment: and ef I was in yer place I should have my own way about my burial, and have everythin' did straight and systematic-like, accordin' to my own idees of the thing. Now, me and the hound there has our own notions about the treatment the mortal frame should receive arter the sperit has left it, and we conceit that it should be treated as a Huron treats his lodge when he is about to move out of it forever. But we can guess our notions wouldn't suit ye nor seem reasonable-like, because ye was eddicated another way, and I have always noted that a man sticks to his 'arly eddication as a moose sticks to his gait. So we won't distarb ye with our idees; but do jest as ye tell us to, even ef it be agin reason, as me and the hound understand it.'

"Well, the man seemed to be sort of encouraged to say his mind out arter what I had said, and arter lookin' at the sky awhile, with his eyes half shet, he said:—

" 'Do you know, John Norton, for days I have

been haunted with the fear of dying alone. I dare say it is foolish of me, but I can't help it, nevertheless, and I praise the Lord that He has sent you to me in the hour of my need. The sight of your face helps me beyond what I can tell, and the sound of your voice has banished the terrible loneliness from my soul. Yes, I shall die happy, now that the companionship of my kind is given me in death. When I am gone I want you to give me a decent burial, as they do down on the coast where I was born. And the way of it is this: They dress the body in good clothes, and put it in a coffin, and they read a chapter or two from the Bible at the house where the man lived, and the minister prays and the choir sings. Then they take the coffin to the grave and bury it, and they generally have a prayer at the grave; and they sod the grave, and put a slab of stone at the head, and plant flowers on the mound. I know, old man, that you can't do all this, and you needn't try. Only do the best you can, that is all; especially bury me so the wolves can't get my bones, and say a few pious words above the grave.'

“ Well, arter this he said nothin' for a full hour, and I said nothin' neither, fur it was plain that

his feet was on the very edge of the Great Clearin', and I felt it was nateral for a man standin' at the very eend of the trail to want to look around him in silence awhile; and so I said nothin', fur I feared to distarb his mind as he stood lookin' into the etarnal world. By and by he said:—

“ ‘Old man, the hour is almost come when I must go, and the way ahead is dark. I see no light and no helper. What can I do?’ ”

“ ‘John Roberts,’ I said,—fur I could see by the look of his face and the fear in his voice, that he was in trouble, like a boy lost in the woods,—‘stick to the trail and keep yer eye on the blazed line of His marcy. Don’t hurry, but take it slow and sarcumspectly and trust to the markin’s. I have heerd said that the carry ye be on led through a valley, dim and dusky as a stretch of pine land by night, but that the man who stuck to the line would fetch through all right. And remember that me and the hound ain’t far behind, and sartinly the Lord ain’t far ahead; so stick to the line, and don’t swing a foot from the trail, and ye will strike risin’ land afore long and see light.’ And I moved close up to his side and lifted his head

into my lap, so he could catch his breath easier; fur he was laborin' heavily, and I knowed he couldn't stand it much longer.

"So I sot in the sand holdin' his head, and the hound sot at his feet, and we both kept our eyes on his face; and arter our fashion I prayed fur the man, and put the case before the Lord in a strong sort of a way, I can tell ye.

"Well, arter a while a great change came over his featur. He opened his eyes and looked into my face in a happy way as ef he had seen a new sight, and a smile crept over his lips, and his countenance softened like the clouds arter storm, and he said:—

"'Old man, old man, I see light ahead!' And then he drewed a long, contented sort of a breath, moved his legs out easily in the sand, rolled his head gently over in my lap as ef goin' to sleep, closed his eyes, and his sperit, without groan or struggle, stole out of the body in which it had lodged so long in trouble, and passed through the clear light and the air up to its Maker. And that is the way, Henry, he came to the eend of the trail, and I reckon he found the Lord of marcy waitin' for him at the edge of the Clearin'.

“So I sot in the sand, with his head in my lap, closin’ his eyes, and the hound, accordin’ to his gifts, came and put his nose agin the cheek, and then walked down to the eend of the p’int, and sot down on his hanches, and lifted his nose into the air and lamented.”

CHAPTER IX.

THE DEATH-WATCH.

“WELL, Henry, I didn’t do nothin’ about the burial ontill next day, fur I thought it looked more decent-like not to hurry the matter of the entarment, and, moreover, I conceited it was no more than reasonable that me and the hound should hold a council over the matter; fur there’s nothin’ helps a man’s jedgment more on any p’int, whether it be a funeral or a scrimmage, than to set down and talk it over with a companion, and me and the hound has consorted so much together that we understand each other and never differ on the main p’int of a case,—although I do think that he lost a panther last fall by gittin’ the scent wrong eend to in his nose, and leadin’ off like an onlarned pup on the heel of the track; but the hound thought otherwise, and mayhaps I was mistaken. So I went down on the eend of the p’int where he was lamentin’ accordin’ to his gifts, and put it to him that we had better camp jest where we was, on the trail, and lay over till another day,

and I gave him the reasons fur it systematic-like from beginnin' to eend, and made the p'int's plain 'accordin' to the natur' of the case, and we both agreed to it. And we jined jedgment, furthermore, in this, that the body orter be carried to a camp and watched and not left on the p'int, fur fear the varmints would git to it over night and spile the corpse. So we went back to the body, and carried it to my boat and laid it down on some boughs I had cut fur it, and the hound followed on careful-like and sot down at the feet of the body, and I got in at the other eend and shoved off, and so we fetched the dead over the water till we come to this pine knoll, and here me and the hound come ashore with the body, and sot about preparin' fur the death-watch we knowed we must hold over night.

“ Well, Henry, it was sorter new work, ye see, fur me and the hound; fur though I have buried many a man in the trenches arter the fight, and though I have kivered up a good many red-skins off and on in my life, yit I wasn't very handy at the mournin' equipments of the settlements. But I have seed many a ginerall laid out on his bier, in the old wars, with his uniform on and his sword by his side, and the death

sentries on duty, and the muffled drums all beatin'; and I conceited that though Mr. Roberts wasn't a gineral, nor even a privit in the ranks fur that matter, that he should be treated in an honorable way now he was dead.

“ So I cut some crotches and drove 'em into the ground, and made a frame of small white birches, about the size of a bier, and on these I put a layer of balsam and cedar boughs, and over these I scattered pine tufts until I had a bed fit fur the dead or livin', gineral or privit, and I laid in plenty of hard wood fur my fire, and some pitch knots, fur I said to myself, ‘ Ef the animils come round I will have to shine up on 'em, and defend the corpse ’; fur I feared the panthers — fur this lake is a great spot fur the varmints, and 'leven year ago there was sartinly as many as there is now. And arter I had got the bier ready I laid the body on it, and bolstered the head up nateral-like, and then me and the hound sot down to supper with a dead man at the table. We didn't waste time in the eatin', fur the sun was already down, and by the time we had cleaned things up night had come.

“ Well, Henry, I took my stand at the foot of the bier, and kept my death-watch, rifle in hand,

steady as a sentry on duty, save when I stirred the fire or lighted a pine knot. Fur the animils was oneasy, as they always be when a corpse is round, and I needed the pine knots more than once, and some of the varmints got the tech of lead and the smell of powder that night, I tell ye, fur they was full of their devilments, and made me and the hound as wakeful as ef we was surrounded by inimies."

"Did you really have to kill anything?" I asked, speaking for the first time in an hour; for the Old Trapper had told his story with such naturalness of intonation and gesture that he had held me spellbound by his narrative—and no one could hear him tell the strange tale he was telling and not be carried along by the movement of it,—and now that he was evidently reaching the climax, I feared I should miss some detail of his experience which being omitted would mar the narration, so, hoping to hold his utterance to the line of actual occurrence, I said, "Did you have to kill anything, that night?"

"Well, yis, I did," he replied. "I bored a hole through a dog-wolf over there on the beach, arter I had borne his onnateral howlin' as long as a mortal could; and I dropped a cat from that

dead cedar there, arter me and the hound had stood the stare of her eyes fur ten minutes or more, and, about two in the mornin', a litter of panthers crawled in on us ontill the bush seemed alive with 'em, and I lifted the scalp of the biggest of the drove, arter he had got within forty feet of the corpse and paid no more attention to the brands I pitched at him than ef they was tufts of sod; so with a pine knot all afire, in one hand, to show me the sights, I drove the lead in between his infarnal eyes in a style that taught 'em all manners fur the rest of the watch. Yis, Henry, we had a solemn and lively time of it, fur sartin, that night, and at times it looked as ef there would be no funeral the next day; leastways none that me and the hound would attend, onless we made one fur ourselves; but we stood to our post, and between the brands and the lead and the help of the Lord we brought the body through safe till sunrise.

“ But it was mighty solemn watchin' by the body all by myself on the shores of this lake, here, that night; fur at times the animils would make the air roar and scream, and the mountins to yelp, as ef the upper world was inhabited with cats and wolves and panthers, and then they

would suddenly become quiet, and the world round about was nothin' but silence, with the moon shinin' through it: and the dead man's face was white as the moon and still as the air, fur his troubles was over and the marks of 'em passed from his featur's when his breath went away. And so me and the hound kept our watch by the dead till the sun riz in the east and the hour had come fur the funeral."

CHAPTER X.

THE FUNERAL.

“THE fust thing to do was to fix on the spot fur the grave, which took leetle time to settle, fur it seemed nateral that the body should lie nigh where it had lived; and natur’ sartinly had made a fit spot fur it jest up on the bluff, off the p’int; fur it was clean and sweet there, and the pines was always singin’ overhead. And ef a man is to be buried underground, arter he is dead, which me and the hound hold to be onreasonable and heathenish-like, I conceit he should be laid in a sightly spot, with a good outlook to it, and not stuck away in a swale or ma’sh as ef he was no better nor a cat, or a root-eatin’ hedgehog. So I shaped me a spade from a slab I rived from a pine the lightnin’ had leveled, and digged the grave deep in the dry sand under the pines, and filled it half full of pine stems, and cedar-twigs, and other sweet smellin’ things that grow around; and on the green stuff I flung in an armful of white lilies I plucked in the bay, to make the bed look cheerful and fittin’ fur a mortal

to lie in. When this was done I come back to this spot and did to my boat what I had done to the grave: made it green, and sweet, and handsome, with the growths of natur' that had pleasant scents in them, until the boat was nigh on to bein' full. And then I lifted the body and laid it at length, and put the hands alongside each other on his breast, and, with the hound in the bow of the boat and me in the stern, I swung out into the lake, and with easy stroke lined a course straight as an arrer could go toward the p'int. And so, without the presence of wife or child, or kin of any kind to attend him, without bell, or drum, or priest, the man who had deserted his home and fellow-bein's went toward his grave.

“ Well, arter a while the boat teched the sand, and the hound got out; and I shoved it up a leetle further and I got out, and liftin' the body in my arms I carried it up the p'int, and climbed the knoll till I come to the grave, and I laid the corpse down on the pine tufts and the lilies. And I recalled all the man had told me about the singin' and the prayer and the Book, and I did the best I could, under the sarcumstances, to follow the trail of his directions, and I knowed

ef I did the best I could accordin' to my gifts, the sperit of the man would overlook the rest; but I felt sartin that somethin' orter be said out of the ordinary run of human talkin', or the man wouldn't be more than half buried arter it was all ended. And the hound seemed to jine with me in the idee, fur he looked up in my face in a questionin' way, as ef askin' when the sarvice was to begin. So arter a minit I got down on my knees and told the Lord what I thought was jedicious. I think I can recall jest about what I said word fur word, fur my mem'ry is good, and a man don't talk overfast, Henry, in sech sarcumstances, and it has all come back to me sence I sot here to-night as ef it was but yesterday sence I buried the man, and I can give ye the words pritty nigh. Yis, I got down on my knees by the edge of the grave and said:—

“ ‘Great Sperit, here lies the body of one of Thy creetur's. His 'arthly ways was known to Thee, and the wrong of his wickedness was not hidden. He seems to have straightened the trail of his misdoin's in the eend, and fetched through to the Great Clearin' as a mortal should. But me and the hound knowed leetle about him, and jest how he came to Thy presence we couldn't

see, but it sartinly looked hopeful. Here me and the hound has brought his corpse fur entarment accordin' to orders, and the trail at this p'int is onsartin', but we mean to fetch through to the eend of this job with Thy help. So jest give us a lift at this talkin', that the corpse may have a sarvice as is becomin'. Bless us in our endivers, and let Thy peace, which is one, as I understand it, with Natur's, come on this grave I am buildin', and here rest until the Judgment Day. Then square accounts with the man, not by the line of give and take, so much fur so much, but by the line of marcy and of overlookin' of scant skins in the man's count; and don't forgit to reckon easily with me and the hound, fur we be rather onsartin' consarnin' the blazes on this line, and suspicion we may git wrong eend to before we fetch through. So be marciful to us three; — to the man because of what he did, and to me and the hound fur what we didn't know how to do. Keep all varmint from this grave,— sechⁿ as cats and wolves,— especially panthers: onless I am here to attend to them, in which case ye may let them come rampin' round as much as the creeturs please, and I'll agree to keep them orderly myself. Amen.

“Well, Henry,” said the Old Trapper, after a pause, “do ye think I did the square thing by the man? I did the best I could accordin’ to my gifts and I sartinly trust the corpse was satisfied.”

I could see that the Old Trapper was troubled in regard to the matter more than he chose to confess, and knowing how impossible it is for one totally unaccustomed to forms of any kind to fall into the grooves of formal utterance, I could fully understand how profound must have been his embarrassment in attempting to conduct a funeral service according to the rules and methods which prevail in civilized, not to say fashionable, communities, and as I looked into the simple, guileless face of the Old Trapper, which showed doubt, perplexity, and pain in its every wrinkle and furrow, I felt that I was authorized to go as far as I could truthfully in the way of comfort, so I said:—

“I think you did excellently, John Norton; and I doubt not that the spirit of the man was well satisfied with what you did to honor his body at its burial, and I know that the Lord understood your circumstances and gave you full credit for the beautiful spirit of obedience to the

dead man's wishes you showed in following his instruction."

"Well, I am mighty glad ye think so, Henry. I have felt oneasy on the matter fur eleven year, fur I feared I had got off the track altogether in the sarvice, fur I had a dim line to trail by, as the man's talk wasn't very plain to me to start with, and the hound was no more help in the matter than an onlarnt pup is to a hunter on a dry track. Yis, I sartinly feel easier in the matter arter what ye have said, and the Lord knows I meant only good to the man, and tried to be respectful to the corpse.

"Well, there isn't much more to tell ye. Arter the sarvice I put some green boughs over the body, so that the dirt wouldn't tech it, and filled it up easy-like and as gentle as I could. And when the fillin' was all in I went and cut some sod with my huntin' knife, with the flowers all growin' in 'em, and made the grave as green and pritty as natur' could be, and then I took position soldier-like and let off my piece as a kind of farewell, and the hound lifted up his voice and gave one lament; and the sarvice was over."

Here the old man paused, and as I stirred the

fire the flame leaped up and brought the features of his time-beaten face into clear relief. And a remarkable face it was, and such as is seldom given to man save when Nature produces her noblest work. It may interest some who have been introduced to him in these pages and who will meet him further on in many scenes, both of peace and war, and who will grow to love him for the purity of his nature, and the courage of his conduct when exposed to temptation on the one hand and peril and death on the other, to have a pen portrait of one of the most noted characters that the latter part of the last century and the early half of the present one produced.

John Norton was, even in his seventieth year, over six feet in height, but so symmetrical was his proportion in his physical stature that, great as it was, it was neither awkward nor ungainly. Temperate in his habits, and constant in the exercises which develop and retain muscular power, he was even at the time of our story a marvel of physical strength. But for the fact that his eye may have lost a trifle of its earlier brightness, and that his hair, once black as a raven's wing, was now sprinkled with threads of

gray, it would be impossible to believe he had reached the period of threescore years and ten, for his form was still erect, his step elastic, and his voice clear and strong. His face was of that square, strong shape, such as you see in a few of the older men still living in New England but who are fast passing away, and with them we fear the type of self-reliant and indomitable character they represent. His eyebrows were large and abundant, and projected over the eyes. The eyes themselves were gray and changeful in color according to the mood of the speaker. His nose was large, and straight and full at the nostrils and broad at the base. His mouth was firm and in a marked manner suggestive of power. His chin was round and handsome. Into this noble and remarkable countenance time had channeled many a line, and the years had spread the repose of age without weakening the aspect of determined strength. In color the skin was of course bronzed, but of so pure a tan that the blood showed almost as plainly as in an untanned countenance. And, as he sat at the close of his narrative gazing into the fire with his face almost solemn in the gravity of its expression, I said to myself as I gazed steadily at it, revealed in its

every line and wrinkle as it was by the clear blaze, "I have never seen so noble and remarkable a countenance among men." I grew to love it in subsequent years as a son loves the face of a father in whom is no guile.

At last he started from his revery and said, "Henry, the morn is comin', fur I feel the changes in the air that tell the beginnin' of day. Let us heave the rest of the logs on the fire and stretch ourselves fur a nap, fur natur' has her rights and must be dealt reasonably with. We will sleep now, and by and by I will show you the man's grave."

I did as he requested and then, stretched at full length on either side of the fire, we fell asleep.

The sun was high in the heaven before I awoke. I rubbed my eyes to make sure of my sight as I started up, for breakfast was ready, and the Old Trapper sat on the log patiently waiting my waking. The old man divined my thought, for he said: "Nay, nay, Henry, ye need not feel hurt because I got the start of ye; fur sleep to the young be sweet, and I could not wake ye till natur' was satisfied. But the eyelids of the old rest lightly on their balls, and the rays of the sun wakes me quicker nor a

bugler's note rouses a soger. So me and the hound have been stirrin' about, and between yer pack and mine we have got a meal fit fur a king. So jest take a dip in the lake off that rock there, and we will try the vartu' of the vict'als."

After breakfast was over, the Old Trapper said, "Come, Henry, we will go to the grave, and I will show ye where the body of an onhappy man lies buried. I warrant the hound remembers the spot as well as I do."

A few minutes brought us to the point where we landed. The hound, being in the bow of the boat, had touched the shore first, and mounted the bank. No sooner had he reached the top than he lifted his nose into the air, turned around once in his tracks as a hound will when searching for knowledge, then started in a straight line for the bluff.

"Aye, aye, I knowed the dog would recollect the spot," said the Trapper, "and there he goes on a trail that's been whitened by the snows of 'leven winters as ef he was arter a buck jest started from his nest in the moss. It's sartinly wonderful what sense the Lord has given to His creeturs, sech as the beaver and the dog, and

even a wolf in the darkest night can tell the toe from the heel of a track, and I have seed the wild hosses on the prairies act as sarcumspect as ef they was reasonin' mortals."

At this point the long, solemn cry of the hound rose into the air and rolled in mournful cadence over the lake. The Old Trapper halted a moment, and then, as he turned toward me, he said:—

"Ye see, Henry, the heart of the dog is true to his memory of the spot. I have heerd many a dog give vent to his grief over the grave of his master long years arter it was made, and it should larn us mortals to be true to what we have promised the dead, and keep their graves green and sweet arter they have gone. Henry, I feel a leetle oneasy lest somethin' of ill has happened to the corpse on the bluff. Come, let us go and see."

So saying, he started for the knoll, and I followed on. We soon reached the upper edge, and the grave, with the hound sitting on his haunches at the foot of it, was before us. The Old Trapper's face brightened as he saw it had not been disturbed, for, except that the mound had shrunken somewhat, and that the green

growths of nature were more luxuriant, it was evidently the same as when it had been fashioned eleven years before.

The Old Trapper paused as he reached the head of the mound, and, leaning on the muzzle of his rifle, said, " Henry, the Lord has sartinly been marciful, and kept the grave ondistarbed, and natur' has made it handsomer than it was when me and the hound left it; and a sightly spot it is, and a cheerful one fur a grave to be in, fur the view up the lake is a good un, as ye see, Henry, and the pines overhead keep up a pleasant sort of a darge. Yis, it sartinly is a cheerful spot fur a grave, and ef me and the hound could make it seem reasonable to us we would sartinly pick some sech spot as this to lie in arter we be dead; but it don't square with our notions of right and wrong, and we can't make it nohow, though we have held many a council over it. Still, a grave makes solemn and instructive company fur a mortal, especially fur one as old as me and the hound; and it may be, a leetle overhaulin' the pack, and goin' over the count of the years we have lived sence we left this grave, wouldn't do either of us any hurt; and as it is a matter that the young and them that has long

life ahead of 'em ain't much interested in, perhaps it may be as well that ye go back to the camp and pack things up fur a start, Henry, fur we will take to the boats when me and the hound has done with our meditations."

Appreciating the wish of the Old Trapper to be for a brief time alone, I retired down the knoll, and entering the boat was soon at the camp. As I stepped ashore, I cast my eyes across the bay to the bluff, and then I uncovered my head. The Old Trapper, with the hound looking steadily into his upturned face, was kneeling at the head of the grave, engaged in prayer.*

* Authors, like other people, have their likes and dislikes, and I have never liked this story and never intended to publish it in my Complete Works. It was written simply to introduce the Old Trapper to the public and "get my hand in," as the saying is, and I have always regarded the "Story of the Man who didn't Know Much" as the first of the Adirondack Tales. But those whose judgment I am bound to respect have persuaded me to include it in this volume, because it was the first of the series and because, in their opinion, it had merit enough to deserve it. The former reason prevailed with me, for I never thought the story was worth preserving, and don't now!

WHO WERE THEY?

WHO WERE THEY ?

CHAPTER I.

AT the head of a stretch of swiftly running water the river widened into a broad and deep pool. From the western bank a huge ledge of rock sloped downward and outward into the water. On it stood the trapper, John Norton, with a look both of expectation and anxiety on his face. For a moment he lifted his eyes and gazed long and steadily through the tree-tops and as his eyes fell to the level of the river, while the look of anxiety deepened on his countenance, he said :—

“Yis, the wind has changed, and the fire be comin’ this way, and ef it gits into the balsam thickets this side of the mountin and the wind holds where it is, a buck in full jump could hardly outrun it. Yis, the smoke thickens; ef I didn’t know that the boy would act with jedgment, and that he’s onusually sarcumspect, I would sartinly feel worried about him. I hope

he won't do anything resky fur the sake of the pups. Ef he can't git 'em, he can't; and I trust he won't resk the life of a man for a couple of dogs."

With these words the Trapper relaxed into silence. But every minute added to his anxiety; for the smoke thickened in the air, and even a few cinders began to pass him, blown onward with the smoke, by the wind.

"The fire is comin' down the river," he said, "and the boy has it behind him. Lord a massy! hear it roar. I know the boy is comin', fur I never knowed him to do a foolish thing in the woods; and it would be downright madness fur him to stay in the shanty, or even go to the shanty, ef the fire had struck the balsam thicket afore he made the landin'. Lord, ef an oar-blade should break!—but it won't break. The Lord of marcy won't let an oar that the boy is handlin' break, when the fire is racin' behind him, and he's comin' back from an arrand of marcy. I never seed a man desarted in a time like —"

A report of a rifle rang out quick and sharp through the smoke.

"God be praised!" said the Trapper, "it's

the boy's own piece, and he let it off as he shot the rift the fourth bend above. Yis, the boy knows his danger, and he took the 'vantage of the rift to signal me with his piece, fur oars couldn't help him in the rift, and the missin' of a single stroke wouldn't count. I trust the boy got the pups arter all," added the Old Trapper, his mind instantly reverting to his loved companions the moment it was relieved from anxiety touching his comrade.

It couldn't have been over five minutes after the report of the rifle had sounded before a boat swept suddenly around the bend above the rock, and shot like an arrow through the haze toward the Trapper. Herbert was at the oars, and the two hounds were sitting on their haunches at the stern. The stroke the oarsman was pulling was such as a man pulls when, in answer to some emergency, he is putting forth his whole strength. But, though the stroke was an earnest one, there was no apparent hurry in it; for it was long and evenly pulled, from dip to finish, and the recovery seemed a trifle leisurely done. The face of the Trapper fairly shone with delight as he saw the boat and the occupants. Indeed, his happiness was too great to be enjoyed silently, and, in

accordance with his habit, when greatly interested, he broke into speech.

“Look at that now!” he exclaimed, as if speaking to some one at his side, “look at that now! There’s a stroke that’s worth notin’, and is a kind of eddication in itself. Ye might almost think that there wasn’t quite enough snap in it; but the boy knows that he’s pullin’ fur his life, and the life of another man somewhere below him — not to speak of the pups; — and he knows it’s good seven mile to the rapids, and he’s pullin’ every ounce that’s in him to pull, and keep his stroke. Now, he’s come five mile, ef he’s come a rod, and I warrant he hasn’t missed a stroke, save when in shootin’ the rift he let off his piece. And he knows he’s got seven mile more to pull, and he’s set himself a twelve mile stroke; and there ain’t many men that could do it, with the roar of the fire a leetle way behind him. Yis, the boy has acted with jedgment, and is sartinly comin’ along like a buck in full jump. I guess I’d better let him know where I be.

“Hillo there, boy! — Hi! hi! pups — here I be on the p’int of the rock as fresh as a buck arter a mornin’ drink. Ease away a leetle,

Herbert, in yer stroke, and move the pups forard a leetle and make room fur a man and a paddle, fur the fire is arter ye and the time has come to jine works."

The young man did as the Trapper requested. He intermitted a stroke, and the hounds, at a word, moved into the middle of the boat and crouched obediently in the bottom, but whimpering in their gladness at hearing their master's voice again. The boat was under good headway when it passed the point of the ledge on which the Trapper was standing, but as it glanced by, the old man leaped with practiced agility to his place in the stern, and had given a full and strong stroke to his paddle before he had fairly settled to his seat.

"Now, Herbert," he began, "ease yerself a bit, fur ye have had a tough pull, and it's good seven mile to the rapids. The fire is sartinly comin' in 'arnest, but the river runs nigh on to straight till ye git within sight of 'em, and I think we will beat it. I didn't feel sartin that ye had got the pups, Herbert, fur I could see by the signs that ye wouldn't have any time to spare. Was it a tech and go, boy?"

"The fire was in the pines west of the shanty

when I entered it," answered the young man, "and the smoke was so thick that I couldn't see it from the river as I landed."

"I conceited as much," replied the Trapper, "I conceited as much. Yis, I knowed 'twould be a close shave ef ye got 'em, and I feared ye would run a resk that ye oughtn't to run, in yer love fur the dogs."

"I didn't propose to leave the dogs to die," responded the young man; "I think I should have heard their cries in my ears for a year had they been burned to death in the shanty where we left them."

"Ye speak with right feelin', Henry," replied the Trapper. "No, a hunter has no right to desert his dog when danger be nigh; fur the Creator has made 'em in their loves and their dangers, alike. Did ye save the powder and the bullits, boy?"

"I did not," responded Herbert; "the sparks were all around me and the shanty was smoking while I was feeling around for the dogs' leash. I heard the canister explode before I reached the first bend."

"'Twas a narrer rub, boy," rejoined the Trapper, "yis, I can see 'twas a narrer rub ye had of

it, and the holes in yer shirt show that the sparks was fallin' pritty thick and pritty hot, too, when ye come out of the shanty. How does the stroke tell on ye, boy?" continued the old man, interrogatively. "Ye be pullin' a slashin' stroke, ye see, and there's five mile more of it yit ef there's a rod."

"The stroke begins to tell on my left side," answered Herbert; "but if you were sitting where you could see what's coming down upon us, as I can, you would see it wasn't any time for us to take things leisurely."

"Lord, boy," rejoined the Trapper, "do ye think I haven't any ears? The fire is at the fourth bend above us, and the pines on the ridge we passed five minutes ago ought to be blazin' by this time. Ah me! boy, this isn't the fust time I've run a race with a fire of the devil's own kindlin', alone and in company both. And my ears have measured the roar and the cracklin' ontill I can tell to a rod, eenamost, how fur the red line be behind me."

"What do you think of our chances?" queried his companion; "shall we get over the carry in time, for I suppose we are making for the big pool, are we not?"

“Yis, we be makin’ fur the pool,” replied the Trapper, “fur it’s the only safe spot on the river; and as fur the chances, I sartinly doubt ef we can fetch the carry in time. Ef the fire isn’t there ahead of us, it would be on us afore we could git to the pool at the other eend.”

“Why can’t we run the rapids?” asked Herbert, promptly.

“The rapids can be run, as ye and me know,” responded the old man, “fur we have both did it, although they be onusually swift, and there be spots where good jedgment and a quick paddle is needed.”

“Why,” exclaimed Herbert, “the last time we went down we never took in a drop of water.”

“It’s true, as ye say, boy,” responded the Trapper, “yis, we sartinly did as ye say, though few be the men that know the waters that would believe it.”

“Why, then,” exclaimed the young man, “can’t we do it again?”

“The smoke, boy, the smoke,” was the answer. “The smoke will be there ahead of us. And who can run a stretch of water like the one ahead yender, with his eyes blinded? No, boy,

we must git there ahead of the fire, fur we can't run the rapids in the smoke. Here," he added, "ye be pullin' a murderin' stroke, and it's best that I spell ye. Down with ye, pups, down with ye, and lie stiff as a frozen otter while the boy comes over ye."

With the celerity of long practice in boating, the two men changed places, and with such quickness was the change in position effected, that the on-rushing shell scarcely lessened its headway. The Trapper seized the oars on the instant, and Herbert supported him with equal swiftness with the paddle, and the light craft raced along like a feather blown by the gale.

For several moments the Trapper, who, by the change in his position, was brought face to face with the pursuing fire, said not a word. His stroke was long and sweeping, and pulled with an energy which only perfect skill and tremendous strength can put into action. He looked at the rolling flames with a face undisturbed in its calmness and with eyes that noted knowingly every sign of its progress.

"The fire is a hot un," he said at length, "and it runs three feet to our two. We may git there ahead of it, fur there isn't more than a

mile further to go; but — Lord!” exclaimed the Trapper, “how it roars! and it makes its own wind as it comes on. Don’t break yer paddle shaft, boy; but the shaft is a good un, and ye may put all the strength into it that ye think it will stand.”

The spectacle on which the Trapper was gazing was, indeed, a terrible one; and the peril of the two men was getting to be extreme. The valley, through the center of which the river ran, was perhaps a mile in width, at which distance a range of lofty hills on either side walled it in. Down this inclosed stretch the fire was being driven by a wind which sent the blazing evidences of its approach in advance of its terrible progress. The spectacle was indescribable. The dreadful line of flame moved onward like a line of battle, when it moves at a charge against a flying enemy. The hungry flames ate up the woods as a monster might eat food when starving. Grasses, shrubs, bushes, thickets of undergrowth, and the great trees which stood in groves over the level plain, on either side of the stream, disappeared at its touch as if swallowed up. The evergreens crackled and flamed fiery hot. The smoke eddied up in rushing volumes.

Overhead, and far in advance of the on-rolling line of fire, the air was darkened with black cinders, amid whose somber masses fiery sparks and blazing brands shone and flashed like falling stars.

A deer suddenly sprang from the bank into the river ahead of the boat, and, frenzied with fear, swam boldly athwart its course. He was followed by another and another. Birds flew shrieking through the air. Even the river animals swam uneasily along the banks, or peered out of their holes, as if nature had communicated to them, also, the terrible alarm; while, like the roar of a cataract,—dull, heavy, portentous,—the wrath of the flames rolled ominously through the air.

Amid the sickening smoke which was already rolling in volumes over the boat, and the terrible uproar and confusion of nature, Herbert and the Trapper kept steadily to their task. But every moment the line of fire gained on them. The smoke was already at intervals stifling, and the heat of the coming conflagration getting unbearable. Brands began to fall hissing into the water. Twice had Herbert flung a blazing fragment out of the boat. And so in a race

literally for life, with the flames chasing them, and their lives in jeopardy, they turned the last bend above the carry which began at the head of the rapids. But it was too late; the fiery fragments blown ahead by the high wind had fallen in front of them, and the landing at the carry itself was actually enveloped in smoke and flame.

“The fire be ahead of us, boy!” exclaimed the Trapper, “and death is sartinly comin’ behind. The odds be agin us to start with, fur the smoke is thick and the fire will be in the bends at least half the way down, but it’s our only chance; we must run the rapids.”

“What about the dogs?”

“The pups must shirk fur themselves,” answered the old man; “I’m sorry, but the rapids be swift and the waters shaller on the first half of the stretch. And the pups settle the boat half an inch, ef they settle it a hair. Yis, overboard with ye, pups! overboard with ye!” commanded the Trapper. “Ye must use the gifts the Lord has gin ye now, or git singed. I advise ye to keep with the current and come down trailin’ the boat; fur man’s reason is better than dog’s reason, techin’ currents and eddies, not to

speck of falls. But take yer own way; fur yer lives be in jeopardy with yer master's, and ye ought, fur sartin, to have the chance of dyin' as ye like to. But yer best chance is to foller the boat, as I jedge."

The Trapper had continued to talk as if addressing members of the human, and not the canine, species, and long before he had finished his remarks the hounds had taken to the water and were swimming with all their power directly in the wake of the boat, as if they had actually understood their master's injunction, and were, indeed, determined to shoot the rapids in his wake.

The conflagration was now at its fiercest heat. The smoke whirled upward in mighty eddies, or rolled along in huge convolutions. Through the fleecy rolls here and there tongues of flame shot fiercely. The river steamed. The roar of the rushing flames was deafening. The tops of the huge pines that stood along the banks would wave and toss as the fiery line reached them, and then burst into blaze, as if they were but the mighty torches that lighted the path of the passing destruction. In all his long and eventful life, passed amid peril, it is doubtful if the

Trapper had ever been in a wilder scene. The rapids were ahead and the fire behind and on either side. The great mass of flame had not yet rolled abreast the boat, but the blazing brands were already falling in advance. It was not a moment to hesitate; nor was he a man to falter when action was called for.

By this time the boat had come nigh the upper rift of the rapids, and the motion of the downward suction was beginning to tell on its progress. The Trapper shipped his oars and, lifting his paddle, placed himself in a kneeling posture, gazing down stream. The fire was almost upon them, and the smoke too dense for sight. But pressing as was the emergency, neither man touched his paddle to the water, but let the boat go down with the quickening current to the verge of the rapids, where the sharp dip of the decline would send it flying.

“This be an onsartin ventur’; Henry,” cried the Trapper, shouting to his comrade from the smoke that now made it impossible for the young man, even at only the boat’s length, to see his person, “this be an onsartin ventur’, and the Lord only knows how it will eend. Ye know the waters as well as I do; and ye know

the p'int's where things must be did right. We'll beat the smoke arter we make the fust dip and git out of the thickest of it in the fust half of the distance, onless somethin' happens. Let her go with the current, boy, ontill yer sight comes to ye, fur the current knows where it's goin', and that's more than a mortal can tell in this infarnal smoke. Here we go, boy!" shouted the old man as the boat balanced in its perilous flight on the sharp edge of the uppermost rift. "Here we go, boy!" he shouted out of the smoke and the rush of waters, "it's hotter than tophet where we be and it matters mighty leetle what meets us below."

CHAPTER II.

TO those who have had no experience in running rapids, no adequate conception can be given touching what can with truth be called one of the most exciting experiences that man can pass through. The very velocity with which the flight is made is enough of itself to make the sensation startling. The skill which is required on the part of the boatman is of the finest order. Eye and hand and readiest wit must work in swift connection. Some who read these lines perhaps have — shall we say? — enjoyed the sensation which we have always found impossible to describe in words. These, at least, will appreciate the difficulty of our task, and also the peril which surrounded the Trapper and his companion.

The first flight down which the boat glanced was a long one. The river bed sloped away in a straight direction for nigh on to fifty rods, and at an angle so steep that the water, although the bottom was rough, fairly flattened itself as it ran; and the channel where the current was the

deepest gave forth a serpentine sound as it whizzed downward. The smoke which hung heavily over the stretch from shore to shore was too dense for the eye to penetrate a yard. Amid the smoke sparks floated, and brands, crackling as they fell, plunged through it into the steaming water. Guidance of the frail craft was, as the Trapper had predicted, out of the question; the two men could only keep their position as they went streaming downward. They kept their seats like statues, knowing well that their safety lay in allowing their light shell to follow without the least interruption the prevalent pressure of the swift current.

Half down the flight the volume of smoke was parted, by some freak of the wind, from shore to shore, and for a couple of rods they saw the water, the blazing banks, the fiery tree-tops, and each other. The Trapper turned his face, blackened and stained by the grimy cinders, toward his companion and gave one glance, in which humor and excitement were equally mingled. His mouth was opened, but the words were lost in the roar of the flame and the rush of the water. He had barely time to toss a hand upward, as if by a gesture he would

make good the impossibility of speech, before face and hand alike faded from Herbert's eyes as the boat plunged again into the smoke.

The next instant the boat launched down the final pitch of the declivity and shot far out into the smooth water that eddied in a huge circle in the pool below. The smoke was at this point less compact; for through it the blazing pines on either shore flamed partially into view.

"It's the devil's own work, boy, fur sartin," cried the Trapper, "and the fool or the knave that started the fire orter be toasted. I trust the pups will be reasonable and come down with the current. Has the fire teched ye anywhere?"

"Not much," answered Herbert. "A brand struck me on the shoulder and opened a hole in my shirt,—that is all. How do you feel?"

"Fried, boy; yis, act'ally fried. Ef this infarnal heat lasts I'll be ready to turn afore we reach the second bend."

"How goes the stream below?" asked Herbert.

"All clear fur a while," answered the Trapper, "all clear fur a while. Put yer strength into the paddle till we come to the varge below, fur the

fire be runnin' fast, and it's agin reason fur a mortal to stand this heat long."

"Shall we run out of the smoke at the next flight?" asked Herbert.

"I think so, boy, I think so," answered the Trapper; "the maples grow to the banks at the foot of the next dip, and it isn't in the natur' of hard wood to make smoke like a balsam."

He would have said more, but his companion had nodded to him as he had ended the sentence, for they had come to the last flight of the rapids, and the great pool lay glimmering through the branches of the trees below.

"I see it, too, boy. I see it. Take the east run, fur the water be deeper that way, and the boat sets deep. I won't trouble ye, fur ye know the way. Lord! how the water biles! Now's yer time, boy,—to the right with ye! to the right! Sweep her round and let her go!"

Away and downward swept the boat. The strong eddies caught it, but the controlling paddle was stronger than the eddies, and kept it to the line of its safest descent. Past rocks that stood in mid current, against which the swift-going water beat and dashed,—past mossy banks and shadowed curves where the great eddies

whirled,— down over miniature falls into the bubbles and froth the light craft swept, and with a final plunge and leap jumped the last cascade, and, darting out into the great basin, ran shoreward.

It touched the beach, and the Trapper and Herbert rose to their feet; but for a moment neither stirred, for in front of them, not thirty feet away, at the line where the sand and the green mosses met, and looking directly at them, *stood a man and a girl!*

WHO WERE THEY? The two men asked this question a thousand times mentally in the next two months, and once afterward they asked it aloud, as they looked into each other's eyes across a grave. But to the question, whether spoken or silent, no answer ever came.

The world has its enigmas, and these were one.

Amid the jabbering crowd we chaff and chatter with, we meet occasionally a man who never chaffs nor chatters,— a man who sees all things: perhaps, because of this, suffers all things, but says nothing at all. The sphinxes are still extant. The old time ones were of stone and bronze; the modern ones are of flesh and blood:

that's all the difference. Nay, not quite all; for the secrets that the ancients held smothered within the folds of their stony silence were only such as nature revealed to them from her desert posts,—the secrets of sunrises and starry nights, and simooms that swept the sandy plain, and of civilizations the murmurs of whose rising, and the crash of whose sudden overthrow, they needs must hear. But the secrets that men hear to-day, and by hearing of which are made silent, are the secrets of lives being lived, of hearts being broken, of intentions so noble and failures so bitter as to make men skeptical whether God keeps watch over the passing events on the earth.

Was he young? No. Was he old? No, again. How old was he? Forty, perhaps: it may be fifty. The two men who stood looking at him never thought of his age, neither then nor afterward; never thought whether he was old or young. There are people who have no age to those who know them. Is it because their bodies so little represent them? A friend has been away—for years. He returns; enters your room; you shake his hand heartily in welcome. And then you stand off and look at him. You look at his hair and note the gray in it—at the wrinkles

in his face — the dozen and one marks that denote change — and say, “ You’ve grown old, old boy ” ; and so we judge most men, and so they should be judged. Why? Because they are not great and strong and soul-large enough to dwarf their bodies out of sight and dwindle them into insignificance.

But now and then you meet one whose mind represents him ; whose soul is so gloriously finished that, as in the case of a great painting, you do not think of the frame around it, nor take notice of it at all. He is so strong vitally ; so great in living force — in vital energies — in moving and persuading power — that he is to you like an immense, endless, all-conquering Life, wholly independent of his embodiment, who might exist in any form, — angel, archangel, spirit, winged or wingless, supernal or infernal, and still, in all forms, in all places, in all moral states would remain true to himself and be the same. There are some, I say, who are like this, — who are not of the earth, earthy, nor of the body, but of the spirit, whether good or bad, spiritual : angel or demon, always.

Do you know one such? No? Perhaps not, for they are rare, very rare. But some such there

are, and if you know one, or one like to such a one, I ask you if you do not think of him as I have said? Body! what is a body to such a man? What is a formation of clay, deftly mingled in its chemistry round about such an indomitable indwelling spirit? Does the old rain-sodden nest photograph the bird, the swiftness and glory of whose wings lived in it once? What is age to such a one? What has he to do with the passing of years? Such a one is young and old both, from the beginning of his career forever onward. He has the freshness of youth, the strength of manhood, and the sagacity of age, fixed permanently in his structure, as Nature fixes her colors in the fiber of the ash and the oak. Such a man has no age. How silly to ask how old he is! If you ask me, I should answer, *Who can tell?* His earthly parents say he was born on such and such a date. Was he? or had he lived, as Mary's Son had, ages before he took — in God's wise purpose — flesh? Who can tell?

“*Heresy?*” I'm not writing a sermon, I am writing a story, and I seek to make my readers think. That would not be essential if I were sermonizing. Good people don't want that kind of preaching!

But to return. Was he young? Was he old? Neither then nor ever after did Herbert and the Trapper think of him as having age; and yet he was with them, and his body had all the marks which reveal to the noticing eye the measure of man's days. This is the young man's description of him:—

“Tall, straight, and well-formed; large in size, but shapely; hair brown, with gray in it; in all the face a look of great power, reserved, but ready to act; eyes of changeable color, that took the shade of the emotion that chanced to come and look out of them: when unoccupied, cold, gray, and meaningless as a window-pane behind which no face is; and over all the countenance the look of great gravity, divided but by the slightest line from sadness.”

So Herbert described him; but he always used to add: “Remember, this was only his body, and *therefore no description at all.*”

The girl? Why, certainly, you shall know of her, and from the same authority:—

“The girl that was with this strange man was not a girl merely but both girl and woman; for she was at that age when the sweet simplicity of the one, and the full charm of the other, come

into union, and for a time, at least, stand in attractive alliance. She was of medium height and perfectly formed. Her hair was brown, as were her eyes, that were large and mild of look; and over all her face was such an expression of gentleness and peace as I never saw on any other woman's face, and she loved the man with so great a love that it both made her life and took it."

For a moment Herbert and the Trapper stood looking at the man and the girl, who were standing on the edge of the beach, looking silently at them; and then the Trapper said, still standing in the boat:—

"We would not have run agin ye so sudden-like had we seed ye, friend; and ef our company be not pleasant to ye, we will move on, and camp on some clump further down," and the old man placed his paddle against the beach as if he would breast the boat out into the pool.

"I beg you not to do so," answered the man on the beach; "you have as good a right to this camp-ground as we, and I dare say a better one, as we are but strangers to the woods; while you, old man, look as if you had made them your home for years."

“Ye speak the truth, friend,” replied the Trapper. “Yis, the woods be my home; and ef livin’ in ’em gives man a right, few would gain-say my claim. Yis, it’s thirty year agone sence I hefted the fust trout from this pool, and briled him on the bank there,—and a toothsome supper he made fur me, too. Lord a massy, boy,” exclaimed the old man, half turning toward his companion, “what a thing memory be! Thirty year!—and I’ve seed some wanderin’ sence then,—but I remember as though I’d eat him last night jest how that trout tasted. You’re sartin, friend, that we won’t distarb ye ef we come ashore?”

“No, no, old man,” answered the other; “come ashore,—you and your companion. Our camp is the other side of the balsam thicket, there; and after you have built your own, we will come down and pass an hour with you, unless we should disturb you in your occupation or your pleasure.”

“I be a man of the woods, as ye see,” replied the Trapper, “and Henry, here, be my companion; and though his home be in the city, he has consorted with me so much that he’s fallen into my habits,—though it should be said to his credit that the Lord gin him nateral gifts in that

direction; and when we be roamin', we take but leetle with us, and our camps be quickly made. No, no; we will have leetle to offer ye and the lady, but ef, when the sun darkens back of the mountin there, ye will honor an old man by yer comin', ye shall taste some venison that's waited three days fur the mouth, and is tender, as it should be. And ef the pool here will make its name good, ye shall have a trout cooked as the hunter cooks it when the fire is hot and the wet moss plenty."

"We will certainly come," answered the man. "I came into the woods to avoid men, not to meet them; but your face is honest and open as the day, old man; and your head is white as is the head of wisdom. I shall be glad to talk with you, and I doubt not your companion is as educated as you are knowing."

"I've seed the comin' and goin' of seventy year sence I've ben on the 'arth," answered the Trapper, stroking his head with the peculiar motion of the aged when speaking of their age reflectively; "and much have I seed of the passions of my kind, and many be the lessons that natur' has larnt me; and ef the converse of an old man who has lived leetle in the clearin's would be

pleasant to ye, yer comin' will be welcome.— Yis, yis, boy; I seed it. Ye had better j'int yer rod, and I will start a fire. Ye know the size ye want, and ye'll find 'em out there where the bubbles make the letter S."

The two strangers retired toward their own camp; and our friends set about their several tasks. Herbert proceeded to joint his rod, and the Trapper to make a rude fireplace from the stones that lined the bank at the water's edge.

The preparations for the forthcoming repast went forward rapidly. The pool kept its reputation good, and yielded abundantly to the solicitation of Herbert's flies. The trout were large and in excellent condition, and were quickly made ready for the Trapper's treatment. A large piece of bark, peeled from a giant spruce standing near, and laid upon the ground, served for the table,—against the dark surface of which the tin dishes freshly scoured in the sand of the beach gleamed brightly. The venison and trout were cooked as only one accustomed to the woods can do it, and the Trapper contemplated the work of his skill with pleased complacency. At each plate Herbert had placed a bunch of checkerberries, and a bouquet of small but ex-

ceedingly-fragrant flowers adorned the center of the bark table.

At this moment the man and girl drew near.

"I trust," said the man, as they approached, "that we have not kept you waiting by our tardiness?"

"Yer comin' be true to a minit," answered the Trapper, glancing up at the western mountain, the top of whose pines the lower edge of the sun had just touched. "The meat be ready. We sartinly can't boast of the bark or the dishes," he continued, "but the vict'als be as good as natur' allows, and yer welcome be hearty."

"We could ask no more," said the man courteously, "and one might almost think that the hand of a woman had adorned the table."

"The posies be the boy's doin'," replied the Trapper, glancing at Herbert; "he has a likin' fur their color and smell, and I never knowed him to eat without a green sprig or a bunch of bright moss or some sech thing on the bark."

"I am sure I do not like them any better than you do," answered Herbert, smiling, and looking pleasantly into the old man's face.

"They be of the Lord's makin'," responded the Trapper. "They be of the Lord's makin',

and it be fit that mortals should love 'em, as I conceit. I've lived a good deal alone," he continued, "but I never lived in a cabin yit that didn't have a few leetle flowers, or a tuft of grass, or a speck of green somewhere about it. They sort of make company fur a man in the winter evènin's, and keep his thoughts in cheerful directions."

"Your sentiments do honor to your nature," responded the other; "and I am glad to meet with one of your age, who, having lived among the beauties of nature, has not allowed them to become commonplace and unworthy of notice. Many in the cities show less refinement."

"I conceit it's a good deal in the breedin'," answered the Trapper. "There be some that don't know good from evil in natur',—leastwise, they don't seem to have any eyes to note the difference; and what isn't born in a man or a dog ye can't eddicate into him. The breedin' settles more p'int's than the missionaries dream, as I jedge. But, come, friends, the vict'als be coolin' and the mouth loves a warm morsel."

"I am certain," said the man, as they were partaking of the repast, "that I never tasted a piece of venison so finely flavored before."

“I’ve cooked the meat nigh on to sixty year,” answered the Trapper, “and have larnt not to spile the sweetness of natur’ by overdoin’ it. It’s a quick aim that brings the buck to the camp, and a quick fire that puts the steak on to the plate ready for the mouth.—I trust, lady, that ye enjoy the vict’als?”

“I do, indeed,” answered the girl; “and if the cooking were less perfect I should count this as a feast.”

“Yis, yis; I understand ye,” answered the old man. “The sound of the tumblin’ water be pleasant, and the eye eats with the mouth,” and he glanced at the green woods that stretched away, and the brightly colored clouds that hung like fleece of gold in the western sky.

“The barbarian eats from a trough,” remarked Herbert; “civilize him, and he erects a table; and as you add to his refinement he adorns that table until the furniture of it magnifies the feast, and the guests think more of the beauty of the adornments than of the food they swallow.”

And so with pleasant converse the meal progressed. Soon the sun declined, and darkness began to thicken in the pines. The table was

moved to one side, the dishes cleansed, and the fire lighted for the evening. With the darkness silence had fallen on the group,—not that silence which is awkward and oppressive, or which comes from lack of thought, but that fine silence rather which is only the thin shadow of the reflective mood, and because the thought is inward and overfull.

And so the four sat in silence by the fire. Above, a few great stars shone warmly. Here and there the rapids flashed white through the gloom. From a huge pine on the other side of the pool a horned owl challenged the darkness with his ponderous call.

Suddenly the man broke the silence,—broke it with a question which led to a remarkable conversation and a tragical result. And the question was this:—

“Friends, answer me this question: *If a man take a life, should he give his own life in atonement for the dreadful deed?*”

CHAPTER III.

“ If a man take a life, should he give his own life in atonement for the dreadful deed ? ”

Such was the question that the man asked. He was looking at the Trapper at the time,— looking at him steadily; but the sound of his voice as he put the question did not seem to give personal direction to the solemn interrogation; it seemed rather the echo of a reflection, as if his own mind in its communings had come upon the terrible question, and the words which framed it into speech, without volition of his own, had passed out of his mouth.

He was looking at the Trapper, as we said, and the Trapper was looking into the fire,— the light of which, that came and went in flashes, brought distinctly out the settled gravity of the features, and the rugged but grand proportions of the head. There is no better light in which to see an old man's face than the fitful firelight; and no better background than that which the darkness makes.

One would have thought that the interrogation

was not heard, for on the Trapper's face there showed no line of change. The girl remained looking steadfastly into the face of the questioner, and Herbert made no response.

"I asked you a question, Old Trapper," said the man; "a question which reaches to the depths of human responsibility, and points to the heights of human sacrifice. In the old days, the wisdom of the world was with those who lived with nature. Your head is white and you tell me you have lived in the woods since you were a boy. You have seen war; have stood in battle; have slain your man, and made many graves of those you have slain. Have you wisdom? Are you able to answer the question I have asked you?"

"I have, as ye say," answered the Trapper, "ben in wars. I've stood in battle; I've slain men; I've buried those I have slain; I know what it is to take a human creetur's life, and I think I know where the right to do the deed stops and where it begins."

"Where does it begin?" asked the man; "where does the right to take human life begin?"

The words came forth slowly and heavy-

weighted with meaning. It was evident that the question was not asked as a theorist interrogates, but as one puts a question that has personal application to himself. The Trapper felt this. He looked into the man's face, and studied his countenance a moment; noted the breadth of the brow, the large, deep-set eyes, the fine curvature of the chin and cheek; saw the beauty and splendor of it; saw what some might not have seen,—both the beauty of its peaceful mood and the terribleness of the wrath that might surge out of it,—saw all this, and, without answering the question, said simply:—

“You have killed a man.”

The stranger looked steadily back into the Trapper's face, and answered as simply:—

“Yes, I am a murderer.”

Herbert started a trifle. The girl gave a slight exclamation, and lifted her hand as if in protest. The Trapper alone made reply:—

“Ye sartinly don't look like a murderer, friend.”

“He is none! he is none!” exclaimed the girl. “He had provocation, old man! he had provocation!” and then she turned toward the man, and

said: "Why will you say such things? Why will you condemn yourself wrongly? Why do you brood over a deed done in wrath, and under the strain that few might resist, as if it had been done in cool blood, and with a murderer's malice and forethought of evil?"

The man listened to her gravely, with a kind of considerate patience in the look of his face; waited a moment, when she had finished, as one might wait from the habit of politeness, and then, without answering her, said:—

"You have not answered my question, Old Trapper."

"I can't answer it,—I sartinly can't answer it, friend, onless I know the sarcumstances of the killin'; fur there be killin' that is right, and there be killin' that is wrong, and onless I know the sarcumstances of the killin', my words would be like the words of a boy that talks in council without knowin' what he is talkin'. Ef ye killed a man, how did ye kill him?"

"I killed him face to face," answered the man. He paused a moment, and then repeated, "face to face."

"Why did ye kill him?" asked the Trapper. "Had he done ye wrong?"

“He was my friend,” said the man, “my friend, true and tried.”

“Had he done ye a wrong?” persisted the Trapper.

“What is wrong?” asked the man. “I can’t tell whether he had done me wrong or nay. I only know he had crossed my purpose,—stopped me from doing what I had set my heart on doing; and what I set my heart on doing, old man, *I do*.” And the man’s eyes darkened under the abundant brow, and the face tightened and contracted as a rope when a strain is upon it. “The man came between me and my purpose,” he added, “he stood up and faced me, and said I should not do what I purposed to do, and should not have what I had sworn to have; and I killed him where he stood.”

It was astonishing how quietly the words were said, considering the tremendous energy of will which was charged into and through their quietness.

“He had no right to do it,” said the girl; “he had no right to do it. It was none of his business, and you know it wasn’t.” And she spoke apparently to the man, “Oh, sir, why do you not tell them that he was an intermeddler, and med-

dled with what was none of his business,—kindled your rage by his meddling, and that you slew him in your rage, thoughtlessly, unintentionally? Why do you not tell them these things?”

The man listened to her again, politely. There was a look of grave courtesy in his eye, as he half turned his face and looked upon her as she was speaking; but beyond this there was no recognition that he heard her. When she had finished, he turned his face again toward the Trapper, and said:—

“Old Trapper, you have not answered my question. Has a man a right to take life?”

“Sartinly,” answered the Trapper.

“How?” asked the man.

“In war,” answered the Trapper.

“In any other way?” queried the man.

“Yis,—in self-defense.”

“Any other cause?” persisted the stranger.

“Not as a rule,” answered the Trapper.

After this there was a silence. The girl’s head dropped into her two palms, and for an instant her frame shook as one contesting the passage of a strong feeling that insists on expression. The three men made no motion, but sat silently gazing into the fire.

For several minutes the silence lasted. There are two living that will never forget that silence. Then the man lifted his face, and said: —

“Old Trapper, have you ever known remorse?”

“I can’t say I ever did,” answered the Trapper; “though I’ve felt a leetle oneasy arter dealin’ with the thievin’ vagabonds whose tracks I’ve found on the line of my traps. It has seemed to me, sometimes in the evenin’, in thinkin’ the matter over, that perhaps a leetle less bullit and a leetle more scriptur’ might have did jest as well. But a man is apt to be a leetle ha’sh in his anger; and I have an idee that the Lord makes some allowance fur a man’s doin’ when he’s a good deal r’iled. That’s where the marcy comes in. Yis; that’s where the marcy comes in; isn’t it, boy?” and the old man looked at Herbert.

“There is certainly where we need the mercy to come in,” answered Herbert; “but it were better that we acted so that mercy need not be shown.”

The man listened to Herbert’s reply with an expression of strong assent on his countenance; then he turned to the Trapper:—

“ You say, old man, that you never knew remorse. Happy has your life been because of it; and happy shall your life be to its close. I have known remorse. It is a fearful knowledge,—as fearful as the knowledge of hell. Woe to the man that does an evil deed. That instant he is doomed,—doomed to anguish. His divinity punishes him. Within his bosom the great tribunal is instantly set up. The judge takes his seat. The witnesses are summoned; and the whole universe swarms to the trial. His memory is a torment; and all the forces of his mind suddenly concentrate in memory,—the memory of one deed, or of many deeds, even as his sin has been sole or manifold. What torment, old man, is like the torment of one whose memory is confined wholly to his evil deeds! ”

No one made any reply. The anguish of the man's speech made response impossible.

“ Before I did the deed,” he continued, after a pause, “ my memory took knowledge of all sweet things; of all dear faces I had ever seen; of all generous and blessed deeds I had ever done. But after that I could remember but one thing,—the murder; only one face,—the face of him I killed; and all my life, and the glory

of it, was thrown into black eclipse by that one terrible act. Before I did the deed nature was a joy to me, but now in every star I see his countenance looking down upon me. In every flower I see his still, cold face. The winds bear to me his voice. The water of those rapids" — and the man stretched his hand out toward the flowing river — "sounds to me like the rattle in his throat as he lay dying. How shall I find release, old man? How quit myself of this terrible curse?" and the man's words ended in a groan.

"The mercy of the Lord be great," replied the Trapper; "greater than any deed of guilt did by mortal; great enough to cover you, friend, and your misdoings, as a mother covers the error of her child with her forgiveness."

"I know the mercy of the Lord is great," answered the man; "I know His forgiveness covers all; but the old law,—old as the world,—old as guilt and justice,—the law of life for life, and blood for blood, has never been repealed. And this is the one comfort left for the noble: that, however great the guilt, however wicked the deed, the atonement can be as great as the sin. He who dies pays all debts. He who has sent one to the grave, and goes to the grave volun-

tarily, goes into the arms of mercy. I know not where else, with all his searching, man may surely find it."

Again there was silence. Above, the stars shone warmly through the dusky gloom. The rapids roared, falling hoarsely through the darkness. A moaning ran along the pine-tops; the firelight flamed and flickered, and the flames flashed the four faces into sight that were grouped around the brands. At length the Trapper said:—

"What is it ye have in yer heart to do, friend?"

"I took a life," answered the man, "I must give a life in return. I took a life, and my life is forfeited. This is my condemnation, and I pronounce it on myself. My judge is not above; my judge is within. In this the world finds protection, and in this the sinner finds release from sin. There is no other way; at least, no other way so perfect. One man was great enough to die for the sins of others. They who would rise to the level of His life must be great enough to lay down their life for their own sins. This is justice; and out of such true justice blooms the perfect mercy. To this," the

man added thoughtfully, "there is but one objection."

"What is the objection?" asked Herbert. "What is the objection, if one be great enough to make so great a sacrifice?"

"The objection," answered the man, "is found in this: it is so deep a sin to kill; it is so easy a thing to die,—for what is death? The ignorant dread it because they do not analyze it; their lack of thoughtfulness makes them cowardly: for death is going out of bondage into liberty. He who passes through the dark gate finds himself, when he has passed, standing in the cloudless sunshine. In dying, the sorrowful become glad; the small become greater; and, if they die rightly, the sinful become sinless. If a great motive prompts us to death, it is the perfect regeneration. Entering thus the new life, man is born anew. And so in punishment the great law of mercy stands revealed, and sin leads up to sinlessness. In such travail of soul, he who suffers through suffering is satisfied."

"It is sublime philosophy," exclaimed Herbert, "but few are great enough to practice it."

"Rather, sir," exclaimed the man, "few are

knowing enough to accept it. The eyes of men, through their ignorance, are blinded by fear, and they see not the delivering gates though they stand facing the open passage."

"Life is sweet."

The words fell from the lips of Herbert as if they spoke themselves.

"To the innocent, life is sweet," answered the man; "but to the guilty, life is bitterness. The world was not made for the guilty. The beauties and glories of it were not for them. The universe is not sustained for them. Only for the good do things exist. The breasts of life are full; but their nourishment is not for guilty lips to draw. I have seen the time when life was sweet. I have lived to see the time when life is bitter. Through death I go out of bitterness into sweetness. This is the mercy that is unto all, and which all can take,—take freely. Some get it through another,—all might get it through themselves."

"It is a violent deed to kill one's self," said the Trapper.

"You mistake," answered the man; "there is a coarse, rude way: there is a fine and noble way. 'I have power,' said the Man, 'to lay

down my life, and I have power to take it again.' Do you not think, Old Trapper, that a man can die when he wills?"

"I don't understand ye," answered the Trapper.

"The soul rules the body," replied the stranger. "The soul is not bound to the body; it lives in it as a man lives in his house. My body is only my environment. I can quit it at will. I can go out of it."

"Do you mean to say," asked Herbert, "that we can leave our bodies through determination of purpose and mental decision?"

"There have been such cases," answered the man, "and such cases there might be continually. If the relations between the soul and body are recognized, and the supreme authority of the one over the other allowed full action, the soul can do anything it pleases. It can come and it can go. This is my faith."

While the foregoing conversation was being conducted, the girl had remained silent. Herbert sat opposite to her; and as the firelight flamed her face into sight, he could but note the expression of it. The look of her face was that of one who was listening to what she had heard

before, — perhaps many times before, — and which, upon the hearing, she had combated and was determined to continue to combat. And at this point she suddenly spoke.

“ I think, sir,” — and she lifted her eyes to the face of the man, — “ that the living should live for the living rather than die for the dead ; for the dead have no wants, neither of the body nor of the heart, — neither of the mind nor the soul ; or, if they want, God feeds them. But the living want, and crave, and have deep needs, and God feeds them not at all unless through us who live ; and it is our duty to do, and not to die.”

The words were clearly and slowly spoken, — spoken in a quiet but determined tone. The Old Trapper raised his face and looked at the girl, as if surprised at the wisdom of her speech. Herbert was already looking at her. The man slowly turned his face towards her, and said : —

“ Mary, we have argued that point before.”

The tone in which he spoke was not one of rebuke, and yet it conveyed the idea that the point was settled and was not to be re-opened. The girl waited a moment respectfully, as if she felt profound deference for the other's character,

and would not willingly oppose his wish, and then she said: —

“I know, sir, we have discussed it before; but it is not settled, and never can be settled; for it sets in comparison the value of two lives, — the one that was and the one that is; and I say that there are lives — of which yours is one — that belong to others, and cannot be disposed of as if they were a selfish thing. And life is truer atonement for sin than death. You owe more than one debt; and you have no right to pay the one, however great it is, if by the paying of that you leave the others unpaid.”

“Friend,” said the Trapper, “the girl speaks wisdom; leastwise she brings matter into the council which men of gravity should not overlook. The livin’ sartinly have claims. What can you say to her speech?”

For a moment the man made no reply, and then he said:—

“My philosophy is based upon a sentiment, — a sentiment born of conscience, — and conscience makes duty for us all. There is no reasoning against conscience. It is the voice of God; the only God we have. My conscience tells me that

there is but one atonement that I can make. There is no election. I must do it."

"What good," said Herbert, addressing the man, "what good will you do by dying?"

"I shall satisfy myself," said the man.

"And what right have you to satisfy yourself in such a matter?" exclaimed the girl. "What right have any of us to satisfy ourselves? What right have we to be selfish in our death any more than in our life? Oh, sir, if you saw rightly, you would see that you had no right to satisfy yourself in this dreadful way. You should satisfy others. They need you even as the poor need the rich; as the weak need the strong; as those who are prone, because they cannot lift themselves, need one who is strong enough to lift them. It is not heroic to die, unless the full object of life is met by the dying. It is heroic to live, because it is harder than dying. Even death dedicated to atonement can be a greater sin than the deed which one would atone."

"I know not how the girl has such wisdom," said the Trapper, "fur she be young; and yit she sartinly seems to me to have the right of it. I know not who ye be, nor how many look to ye

fur help; but ef ye be one that can help, and there be many that need yer help, I sartinly conceit that ye should live,—live to help 'em."

"You say right! You say right, old man!" exclaimed the girl. "His life is not a common life. It represents such power and faculty and opportunity, and I may say such devotion to the many, that it does not belong to him, and may not therefore be disposed of as if he owned it himself and had the right to do with it as he pleased."

"I do not say," answered the man, "that I own my life. I say rather that I do not own it. I owe it. There are debts you cannot pay by life. The laws of the whole world recognize this; nor do we do by living the greatest service. He who dies to uphold a righteous principle fulfills all righteousness. He who gives away a life in atonement for a life taken makes all life more sacred; and so he serves the living beyond all other service he might do. She looks at individuals; I observe principles. She contemplates only the present; I forecast the future needs of man. Moreover, the highest service one can do man is to serve himself in the highest manner. He who ministers to his own sense of

justice strengthens the judicial sense of the world. Men overvalue life when they suppose that there is nothing better. To teach them that there is something better,—to impress them by some signal event that there is something higher and nobler than mere living,—is to fulfill all benevolence to their souls. How many the Saviour could feed and heal and bless by avoiding Calvary! and yet He did not avoid it. He showed the object of life, which is service. I trust I have not wholly failed to show men that. He then showed the highest object of dying, which is service. Why should I not imitate Him? Why should I not be a law unto myself, and bear the penalty voluntarily?"

The man rose to his feet as he concluded, and looking at the Trapper and Herbert said:—

"Gentlemen, I thank you for your hospitality and your courtesy," — and turning to the girl, he said, "Mary, we will talk this matter over more fully by ourselves."

And then he bowed to the group and turned away.

CHAPTER IV.

LONG after the man and the girl had departed, the Trapper and Herbert sat by their camp-fire discussing the question which their guest had propounded. Their conversation was grave and deliberate, as became the theme; and they united in the opinion that if the deed had been done in anger elicited by a provocation, the man should give himself the favor which the law even would allow under similar circumstances.

“I tell ye, Herbert,” said the Trapper, “the girl said the man had cause,—leastwise, that the man whom he struck worried him to it; and that the blow was given in anger. Now, hot blood is hot blood, and cold blood is cold blood, and ef a man kill another man in cold blood it be murder,—the law says so, and, what is better, natur’ says so; — but ef a man kill another man in his anger, when his blood is up and he is strongly provoked to it, the law says there be a difference, and, what be better, natur’ says there be a difference, and it isn’t murder. And

I conceit, that the girl be right, and that the man has no right in natur', or law either, to murder himself because in his anger he murdered another man. And besides," continued the old man, after a moment's pause, during which he had evidently made an effort at memory, "ef there be any wrath in the case it belongs to the Lord, and not to man. Ye may recall the varse, Henry."

"*'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.'*" Such was the quotation Herbert made.

"Sartinly, sartinly," answered the Trapper; "that is it. Vengeance is the Lord's and He is the only one that can handle it rightly; and the man had better leave it to the Lord."

For several moments Herbert made no reply; and then, as if speaking to himself more than his companion, he said:—

"How the girl loves him!"

"Ye've hit it, Henry," answered the Trapper, promptly. "Yis; ye've hit it in the center. I noted her face: the look in her eyes, and the earnestness of her voice; and there is no doubt about the matter of the lovin'. She is one of the quiet kind, boy; and she has got the faculty

of listenin' a long time,—which isn't nateral to a woman. But when she speaks, ye can see what she is. She has a quiet face, but a detarmined sperit. I've seed several of the same sort, — seed them afore the battle and arter the battle; and I know what's in the heart of the girl. Yis; I know what's in the heart of the girl," and the old man looked at his cômrade across the camp-fire.

The young man returned his gaze, and then said, quietly:—

"What is in the heart of the girl, John Norton?"

"Ef the man dies the girl dies, too," answered the Trapper, and stooping he pushed a brand into the center of the fire.

"It is awful to think so," replied the young man; "it is awful to think that one so lovely should die so young, and die so miserable."

"She belongs to the kind that does sech things," answered the Trapper. "But whether ye can call her dyin' miserable, I sartinly doubt; for there be some that can't die miserable owin' to their feelin's. And I've noted that them that die feelin' a sartin way die happy whenever they die; fur death means one thing to one and an-

other thing to another; and the heart that has lost all is happy to go in sárch of it even ef it be along the trail that the sun never shines on."

And so the two men sat and talked, feeding the camp-fire with sticks occasionally as they talked. They wondered who the man was, and whence he came; wondered if he would change his views, and if the girl could win him over to a rational way of looking at the deed that had been done, and the true way to atone for it; wondered if they could not assist her in her loving task when the morning came; talked and wondered and planned, and at last, wrapping their blankets around them, they laid themselves down to sleep. The last words spoken being by the Trapper, and were these:—

"We will go over in the mornin', Henry, and help the girl."

And then they slept.

Beyond the balsam thicket, by another camp-fire, the girl and the man sat talking,—talking of the deed that had been done, and the atonement demanded, and of the great future beyond this present life; the future that stretches away endlessly, the future of peace to some,—perhaps

to all, who knows? For there be some who think that this life has in it such forces of education, such enlightenment to the understanding, such quickening to the conscience, such ripening of character; and that through its experiences, its trials, and its griefs, come such graces to the souls of those that leave it, that when they pass they leave their worse selves behind them, even as the germ leaves the shuck out of which it has sprouted,—leaves it in the dull, damp ground forever, while it groweth up into the sunlight in which it finds perfection.

“Mary,” said the man, “I have done with the past. My mind turns wholly toward the future. I see it as the shipwrecked sailor sees the land which, if he can but reach, he will not only be beyond the storm that wrecks him but beyond all storms forever. Companion of my joys, and companion of my grief,—companion in everything but in my sin,—counsel with me, with your eyes turned ahead. You are innocent, and innocence is prophetic. What lies beyond this world, and the life men live in it? What of good waits for him who gives up this life bravely and penitently, and trusts himself to the decisions and the certainties of the great hereafter?”

“My master,” said the girl, “it is not for me to teach you,—you who are so much greater than I,—you who have been gifted with faculties and powers that have lifted you above men. What can I say to you save to repeat what you have said to me?”

“Mary,” he replied, “talk to me from out your heart, and not from out your mind. The prophecies that come to men from Heaven, Heaven has communicated through the emotions of the just and the good and the pure, and not through the perceptions. Tell me of the faith of your heart,—the heart which I know has been free of guile. Tell me of the great Hereafter, and what awaits me there.”

“The Hereafter?” said the girl, and she lifted her eyes lovingly to the face of the man; “the Hereafter is the same as the Here, only larger: as things grown are larger than things ungrown. The Future is to the Present what the river is to the stream, what the stream is to the fountain: it is the flowing out and the flowing on, the widening and the deepening of what is.”

“Is there no gap, no breakage, no chasm or gulf between the Here and the Hereafter?” asked the man.

“No,” said the girl, “there is no gap nor chasm nor gulf, but continuity of progress and perfect sequence. The connections between the Known and the Unknown are perfect. The one does not end and the other begin. Time is the beginning of eternity; and the brief time that men call a day is only a fraction of endlessness.”

“There is no end to life, then?” queried the man.

“End to life!” exclaimed the girl, “how can life end? Life changes its form, its embodiment, the location of its residence; but life is the breath of God, and when once breathed into the universe, and it has taken form and made for itself expression, who may annihilate it? who may take it out of existence? No, master, there is no end to life.”

“It is a sublime faith,” said the man, “and I have proclaimed it unto many; but few have been great enough to receive the doctrine as a verity. In theory they have received it; but their superstition has robbed them of its mighty consolations. But if we do not die, but only pass forward as men go out of a city’s gate along a road that has no end, what fate befalls us? Does a change of nature come to us?”

"Only such as comes through growth," answered the girl.

"Shall I be just as I am when I have passed into the great future?" he asked.

"You will be the same," answered the girl, "only more abundantly yourself. We are all our life looking for ourselves," continued the girl, "and few, if any, find themselves until they die."

"I don't understand," said the man. "I know the Lord is speaking through you; for you are uttering truths so great that at the utterance they seem mysteries. Explain as the teacher explains to the child she is trying to teach."

"I mean," answered the girl, "that death is an enlightenment and a discovery. It will give us revelations of God because it will give us revelations of ourselves; for never do we find Him save as we find Him in His: and we are His. You will not know who and what you are until you get far enough ahead, my master, to look back upon yourself. We must go up and go on a long way before we know what we are now."

Here the conversation paused for a while, and nothing disturbed the profound silence but the roar of the rapids whose ceaseless sounding

swelled and sank in the silence like the waves of the sea. At length the man said, "Have you thought of the land ahead? Is it real? and where is it? and what the life lived there?"

"Why do you ask me such questions," answered the girl, "when you know that I have thought only as you have taught me to think, and am but repeating the faith I learned from your lips? Surely there is a land ahead, or rather many lands; lands and seas and blessed islands in the seas where the blessed live; and loves and lovers, and homes exquisitely and endlessly peaceful are there; and men who have grown nobler than they were here, and women far sweeter than their short life here might make them, live and love in the lands ahead."

The girl spoke low but earnestly; and her words sounded on the silent air like softly-breathed music, so much did her sweet self possess her words. And the man listened as men listen to music when it comes softly and sweetly to their ears.

"Mary," said the man, "you make the life ahead seem so sweet that I shrink from entering it, lest by so doing I escape the punishment for my sin I would fain inflict upon myself."

“Oh, master!” exclaimed the girl, “you do mistake; for though I do believe all I have said, and would trust myself to the far future as young eagles trust themselves to the warm air when they have grown equal to the joy of flight, yet the life of this earth is sweet,—so sweet when the heart is satisfied that one might fear to exchange it for another as one fears to part with what fully satisfies, even though the promise of more abundant things is sure as God. It is sweet to breathe the airs of the earth as health receives them. ’Tis sweet to live and love, and serve in loving, and find your happiness in giving it. ’Tis sweet to teach and guide men up and on to wider knowledge and nobler living,—to make them gentler and finer in their thoughts, and happier-hearted; and oh, my master, ’tis sweet to live with one you love; be unto him a new life daily, and see him grow in your growth, matching it, and so go on in that perfect companionship that the future may give to us as the highest fortune; and having given, has given its best and all.”

“You shall live,” answered the man; “you shall live and have as you deserve, dear girl; and if I have taught you aught which, being known, has made or shall make your life on

earth sweeter, take it as my legacy to you. I had thought to leave you something more,—perhaps something better; but that is past.”

“I will not take your legacy and stay,” answered the girl; “I will rather take it and go with you, that where you are I may be with you. You have promised nothing, and I want no promise. I have only asked one thing, and only one thing now do I ask, and that you will not hold from me, for I have earned it,—earned it by patient serving and by growth that you know came from you.”

“What is it that you ask? Tell me,” replied the man, “for you shall have it if it be in the power of my giving.”

“Companionship,” answered the girl,—“the companionship of service. My mind must serve your mind; for only so may it find its growth for which it longs. You have led me from darkness to light; and into what future light you advance I must enter too. I love you as women love men; but I love you more than that. I love you for what you are separate from what you can ever be to me. I love you as a mind. I love you as a soul. I love you as a spirit. I love you with a purity, with an ambition, with a

longing that men cannot interpret, and earthly relations cannot express; but which God understands, and which in His Heaven I know there must be a name for, and a connection that is known through all the social life of Heaven."

"It must not be," answered the man. "I admit your claim; but it must not be."

"Why must it not be?" asked the girl.

The man hesitated a moment, and then he said:—

"Because my future is uncertain; I dare not say what it will be."

"I care not what it is," answered the girl. "Whatever it is, that I share,—share because I cannot help it. It is not a question of condition, but of presence. With you I could bear all misery; yea, in the misery find happiness. Without you my heart could feel no joy throughout all eternity. Master, my master, I love you so!" and as she looked into the face of the man there came to her countenance the expression of utter devotion; and in her large eyes tears gathered, and, having formed, from them slowly fell.

The man groaned aloud, and said:—

"Alas! alas! My curse is doubled, being brought on thee."

“There is no curse on thee or me,” she answered. “You were but mortal, and, being sorely tempted, did a wicked deed. But no single deed can change the nature. You are the same great man,—great in your goodness as you are great in power, and my love too remains the same; nay, master, it is greater. You should stay and live, and make atonement by living; for you cannot live and not better men. You can do deeds that would wipe out the deadliest guilt. But if you will not stay; if to you it seems right to die, and if only through death your sense of justice can be met, and yourself find peace, then neither will I stay, but go,—go where thou goest. Yea, I will sink or rise with thee; go to this world or that, I care not which or where if only I may be with thee. And I pray thee not to think it hard for me to share thy journey. Why should I be left behind? and what might I have, thou being gone? What pleasure in all the world could I find, with thee out of it? I have no home: thy presence is my home. I have no kindred, and no loves await me anywhere. How could I have, loving thee? For in thee I have found father and mother, brother and sister, and all

sweet relationships. And so whither thou goest, let me go; and where thou stayest, let me stay. Do not resist me, but be persuaded, and let me die with thee. So shall we, passing out of these mortal bodies in the self-same hour, be together still."

The man made no response; but sat silently gazing at her face. In a moment the girl moved softly to his side, and took his hand in hers; and so they sat together while the firelight died away, and the darkness enveloped them. But through the darkness the stars beamed mildly, as if they expressed the sweet mercy which the imaginations of men picture as throned above the azure in whose blue field they stand suspended.

What happened farther is known only to Him whose eyes see through all darkness, and to whom the night is as the day.

During the night the Trapper started suddenly from his sleep. Was it a woman's cry he heard? Was it only such a sound as comes to us at times in dreams? He listened, but heard nothing save the monotonous murmur of the rapids, and the equally steady movement of the night breeze stirring through the pine tops. He listened and, hearing nothing, lay down again, and slept.

The morning came, — came as brightly and cheerfully as if the world knew no sorrow, and the men and women in it had no griefs. The morning came; but before it came, a wing darker than the shadow of the night had passed over the woods; for when the Trapper and his companion visited the camp beyond the balsam thicket, they found the two lying side by side, — the girl's head on the bosom of the man, and her right hand lying gently in his; no mark of violence on their bodies; no instrument of death near; — lying as if they had fallen asleep, the man's countenance in grave repose, the girl's blessedly peaceful; — no name on either; no scrap of paper that might tell who they were. Perhaps the man's faith was true. Perhaps the will has power to will itself, and all of life there is within us, out of the body. Be this as it may, the Trapper and his companion only saw this: the unknown man in the prime of his strength lying dead under the pines, and the girl in her loveliness lying dead by his side.

WHO WERE THEY?

END.

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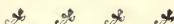
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